

*Parents' involvement in primary education
in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil,
Ecuador.*

*A comparison between private and public primary
schools.*

Ragnhild Fjeldheim



Master of Philosophy in
Comparative and International Education
Department for Educational Research
Faculty of Educational Sciences

Parents' involvement in primary education in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil, Ecuador.

*A comparison between private and public primary
schools.*

Ragnhild Fjeldheim

Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education

Department for Educational Research

Faculty of Educational Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

AUGUST 2013

© Ragnhild Fjeldheim

2013

Parents' involvement in primary education in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil, Ecuador.
A comparison between private and public primary schools.

Ragnhild Fjeldheim

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

This study focuses on parents' involvement in primary education in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil, Ecuador. In literature on education and development, parents are seen as vital actors which can contribute to educational improvement, especially in resource scarce environments. The study has a comparative research design with private and public primary schools as the contrasting cases. The rationale for this comparative aspect is the assumption that how much parents invest in education in the form of tuition fees or other financial contributions might influence their level of participation in the school. Therefore, parents' involvement has been compared in two private fee-paying schools and three public schools, which are free of charge, in the marginalized Northwest part of Guayaquil.

Social Capital Theory is used as an analytical framework, with a discussion of relationships and networks which are brought about as a result of parents' involvement in the school and how these can provide advantages or benefits for the students, the parents and the school itself. Findings from the study indicate that the marginalized context is a factor which necessitates involvement from the parents in the school and also cooperation between the parents and the school. Both parts (the parents and the school) will see the value of having a good relationship with each other and building social capital in the network. This is the case both in the private and the public schools.

The comparison of the findings from the private and the public schools show that one mayor difference is the extent to which the parents help out with manual labour. Payment of fees is used by the parents in the private schools as an argument for not participating in this, whereas parents in the public schools do help out with manual labour. Thus, charging parents for their children's education is a factor which may negatively affect some types of parents' involvement. Regarding other types of involvement, such as attendance at parent meetings, there are no clear differences between the private and the public schools. This implies that payment of fees does not necessarily lead the parents to get *more* involved in school in order to make their voice heard. However, also parents in the public schools contribute with some voluntary financial contributions. The study concludes that these contributions, together with their contributions in kind in form of manual labour, may lead the parents in the public schools to expect to have a say in school related matters. This may further positively affect the degree to which they involve themselves in the school.

Acknowledgements

This master's thesis has been completed with the invaluable support from numerous persons. First of all, I am indebted to my supervisor, Camilla Helgø Fossberg, who has spent several hours guiding me through the whole process, and shared with me her vast amount of knowledge and experience. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge the professors of the CIE programme at the University of Oslo; Lene Buchert, Wim Hoppers, Teklu Abate and Fengshu Liu, for interesting lectures and useful advice on my specific research topic. In addition, I wish to thank my fellow students in the CIE-class for fruitful discussions and many enjoyable social gatherings.

The field work in Guayaquil would not have been accomplished without the help of several persons. It is not possible to mention all of them here. I am grateful to the headmasters who gave me permission to conduct interviews in their schools and to all the respondents who were willing to be interviewed. My warmest thanks are extended to my interpreter, Angelike Paez, who did her job in an extremely skilful way and provided me with relevant background information on Ecuadorian culture and politics. Furthermore, I am indebted to the employees in the Norwegian Mission Alliance in Ecuador and the staff at Casa Alianza, for helping me out with practicalities and answering all kind of questions. In particular, thanks to Ismenia Rivera Cortez, Jorge Pluas, Irene Aandstad, Håkon Aandstad, Rebekka Andreassen Garcia, Daniel Garcia, Ingunn Skutlaberg Valbø and Bjørnar Valbø. Also, thanks to my flatmates in “Bloque C”, who made my stay in Casa Alianza less lonely, and my dear friend Lily Macias Ramos, who accompanied me to various institutions in Guayaquil in the search for relevant information. The writing process in Norway has been facilitated with the help from my sister Solveig and my brother Håvard, who read through the thesis and gave valuable comments. Furthermore, I am grateful to German Camácho and Jorge Luis Bonilla, for helping me with translation.

Finally and most important, my deepest thankfulness goes to my parents, Jorunn and Jan, for continuous support, not only during the work with this thesis, but also during my numerous years of study.

Oslo, August 2013

Ragnhild Fjeldheim

List of tables

Table 5.1: Number of interviews and interviewees.....	34
---	----

Abbreviations

INEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute for Statistics)
LOEI	Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural (Organizational and Intercultural Education Law)
MANE	Misión Alianza de Noruega en Ecuador (The Norwegian Mission Alliance in Ecuador)
MEE	Ministerio de Educación Ecuador (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education)
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NIR	Net Intake Rate
SIISE	Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales del Ecuador (National System of Social Indicators in Ecuador)

Table of contents

Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vi
List of tables	vii
Abbreviations	viii
Table of contents	ix
1 Introduction	1
1.2 Why is parents' involvement important?.....	2
1.3 Comparing private and public schools	3
1.4 Significance of the study	5
2 Contextual background	6
2.1 The educational situation in Ecuador	6
2.2 The geographic location of the study	9
2.3 Parents' involvement in education in Ecuador	12
3 Literature review	15
3.1 The importance of parents' involvement in the school	15
3.2 Private and public education.....	18
4 Analytical framework.....	21
5 Methodology	27
5.1 Research strategy	27
5.2 Research design	28
5.3 Sampling process	28
5.4 Internal validity.....	31
5.5 Interview site	32
5.6 Data collection methods	33
5.7 Analysis methods.....	35
5.8 Ethical considerations.....	35
6 The schools included in the study	36
7 Presentation of findings.....	40
7.1 Financial contributions	40
7.2 Manual labour and events.....	45

7.3	Presence at the school.....	51
7.4	Parent meetings.....	55
7.5	Parents' committees.....	59
7.6	Decision-making.....	- 64 -
7.7	Criticism, suggestions and opinions from parents	- 65 -
8	Discussion	- 68 -
8.1	How do parents get involved in the two different types of schools, private and public?	- 68 -
8.1.1	Financial contributions	- 68 -
8.1.2	Manual labour and events	- 70 -
8.1.3	Presence at the school	- 73 -
8.1.4	Parent meetings	- 75 -
8.1.5	Parents' committees	- 76 -
8.1.6	Decision-making	- 79 -
8.1.7	Criticism, suggestions and opinions from parents	- 81 -
8.2	What might facilitate or prevent involvement from the parents in the two different types of schools, private and public?	- 82 -
8.2.1	Job situation.....	- 82 -
8.2.2	Lack of education	- 84 -
9	Conclusion.....	- 86 -
	References	- 90 -
	Appendices	- 96 -

1 Introduction

This study will focus on primary education in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil, Ecuador. As will be described in chapter two, Ecuador has in the recent decades made a considerable progress in achieving increased access to education and the government has also in various ways increased its investment in education. However, challenges still remain. There are for instance issues related to late entry into primary schools and inequalities between different parts of the society when it comes to access to education in general and access to education of good quality. Thus, there is still need for improvement in the educational sector, especially for the poorest part of the Ecuadorian population. The challenges need to be tackled from different angles and by various stakeholders. This study will explore the role of parents in primary schools. This will be analyzed in the light of Social Capital Theory with a discussion of the relationships and networks which are brought about as a result of parents' involvement in school and how these can provide advantages or benefits for the students, the parents and the school itself.

The study will examine the impact which the parents' financial contributions to the school might have on their level of participation. There is a large amount of private schools in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil where the parents pay matriculation and tuition fees. The public schools in Ecuador are however free of charge. The study will therefore compare parents' involvement in private fee-paying- and public primary schools. In addition, facilitating or preventing factors for parents' involvement in the two different types of schools will be explored.

The following research questions have guided the study:

1. How do parents get involved in the two different types of schools, private and public?
2. What might facilitate or prevent involvement from parents in the two different types of schools, private and public?

In order to investigate these issues, field research was conducted in one of the poorest areas of Guayaquil in September and October 2012. Five schools were chosen as specific sites for the research; two private and three public. Several interviews were organized and performed with

parents, teachers and headmasters and the findings from these interviews form the basis for the analysis and discussion in this study.

The thesis consists of nine chapters. The remaining part of this introductory chapter will elaborate on the rationale for researching parents' involvement and comparing private and public schools. Chapter two will provide contextual background for the study and be concerned with improvements and challenges in education, private and public education and parents' involvement. This will be done both with reference to Ecuador as a country and the marginalized areas of Guayaquil specifically. Chapter three will provide an overview of existing literature on the importance of parents' involvement in education as well as literature which discusses private education. Chapter four will describe the analytical framework used in this study, justify the rationale for choosing this particular framework and elaborate on how it will be used. Chapter five will elaborate on and justify the choice of research methods and strategies and discuss some limitations of the study. Chapter six will give a brief description of each of the schools included in the study. Chapter seven will present the findings of the study and chapter eight will continue with a discussion of these. In chapter nine a general conclusion will be made.

1.2 Why is parents' involvement important?

In chapter two, specific challenges in the education sector in Ecuador and particularly in the geographic location of this study will be presented. These problems need to be handled in different ways and by various stakeholders. In the following, it will be explained why this study is concerned with the role of parents in education.

Various institutions and authors have emphasized the importance of parents' involvement in education. The World Bank Source Book on Social Accountability (The World Bank 2013) argues that the participation of civil society in policy-making and planning is crucial for improving access to quality education, especially in resource scarce environments. "Civil society" in the context of the education sector is defined in the Source-Book as including associations involving parents, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). One example of parent involvement which has proved beneficial is the School-Based Management model "EDUCO" which was conducted in certain schools in poor areas of El Salvador in the 1990s. This model gave communities significant authority over schools, including their finance and

staffing. An early evaluation of this program found that enhanced community and parental involvement improved students' language skills and diminished absenteeism, which in turn could have long-term effects on student achievement (The World Bank 2013, Di Gropello 2006).

The benefits of parents' involvement for children in low-income families are also described in Henderson & Berla (1994). On the basis of 66 studies from the United States, the authors conclude that the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement is not income or social status, but the extent to which the students family is able to a) create a home environment which encourages learning, b) express high expectations about their children's achievement and c) become involved in their children's education at school. This last point is of particular relevance for this study. Henderson & Berla (1994) argue that their studies strongly suggest that when schools support families to develop these three conditions, children from low-income families and diverse cultural backgrounds approach the grades and test scores expected for middle class children.

Thus, there is evidence that parents' involvement in school positively affects student achievement and the quality of education and this is beneficial for poor children. Parents' involvement in education in a marginalized context is therefore of vital importance and this is the rationale for concentrating on this in the present study. Still, there will be a wide view of possible benefits of parents' involvement in schools. That is, the study will also be concerned with beneficial outcomes that might not be shown directly in improved teaching quality or school results. For instance, the findings in this study show that many parents collaborate in order to improve the school's infrastructure. This is beneficial for the children, although it is not necessarily shown directly in improved school results. Still, improved infrastructure in the school is likely to positively affect the quality of teaching.

1.3 Comparing private and public schools

The main rationale for comparing parents' involvement in private and public schools in this study is the assumption that how much parents invest in education in the form of tuition fees or other financial contributions might influence what and how much they demand and expect from the school. Their demands and expectations might in turn influence how and to what

extent they get involved in their child's school in order to make their voice heard. Some examples from the literature serve to underline this point:

Wolff & de Moura Castro (2001) argue in relation to privatization of education in Latin America that charging the clients (the parents) for the services provided, even on a subsidized basis, will encourage them to demand better quality and cost-effectiveness of these educational services. That is, when parents contribute financially to the school, their expectations for what they and their children get out of this investment will be higher. Similarly, Coleman & Hoffer (1987) argue that if parents do not have to pay for their child's education, this will influence their expectations. If there is an assumption that it is the government's responsibility to care for persons in need, this will create increased need. That is, some will argue that if the government pays for education, this will make the parents even more demanding of the government, and less willing to contribute themselves to their children's education, either in form of financial contributions or other types of involvement in the school. Further, Latham (cited in Patrinos et al 2009) argues that the private sector in general has a clear interest in the financial outcomes of its own investments. It is therefore thought to be more efficient than the public sector in maintaining the infrastructure that it builds. On this basis, I will argue that in cases where parents in the private education sector have invested in the school by paying tuition fees, one may assume that they also will be interested in contributing to the maintenance of the school's infrastructure, maybe more than parents in tuition-free public schools.

Since parents' expectations and demands might be influenced by whether or not they pay for their child's education and since this might further affect their involvement in the school, it is interesting and relevant to explore the degree and type of parents' involvement in private and public schools. However, it is not necessarily the case that parents in private schools always pay tuition fees whereas parents in the public schools never contribute financially. A significant numbers of schools in many countries operate across public and private lines. For instance, many private schools receive some public support and not all of them charge tuition fees (AFK-team 2007). Similarly, Wolff & de Moura Castro (2001) argue that nearly every public school in Latin America benefit from some form of private funding. Parents could for instance be required to pay semi-voluntary contributions or they might have costs in relation to the purchase of books, uniforms etc. The Ecuadorian Constitution states that public primary education in Ecuador is free of charge (MEE 2013c). All the private schools included in this

study charge matriculation and tuition fees and they do not receive any support from the state. The comparison between these two types of schools in order to explore the effect of financial contributions is therefore relevant. However, there might be additional financial contributions from the parents, in both the private and the public schools included in the study, such as payment for uniforms or books. This will be explored and discussed in chapter seven.

1.4 Significance of the study

The two preceding sections have elaborated on the importance of parents' involvement in marginalized areas and argued that the extent or type of parents' involvement might differ in private and public schools. There is however a lack of studies which combine these two issues. That is, studies which compare parents' involvement in private and public schools in poor areas. This study will aim to contribute to contribute to this void.

2 Contextual background

This chapter will start with an overview of the educational situation in Ecuador where recent improvements in enrolment rates and government investment in education as well as changes in the legal basis will be highlighted. Also, information on private education in Ecuador will be provided. The chapter will continue with a discussion of remaining challenges, specifically related to inequalities in access to education. This will further be related to the marginalized areas of Guayaquil and the geographic location of this study specifically. Finally, an overview will be given of opportunities and level of parents' involvement in education in Ecuador.

2.1 The educational situation in Ecuador

The duration of compulsory education in Ecuador is 10 years, starting at age 5 and ending at age 14. The duration of primary school is seven years and lower-secondary school lasts for three years (UIS 2013a). The net enrolment rate (NER) is defined as the enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population (UIS 2009). According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2012), the total net enrolment rate for primary education in Ecuador was 97 per cent in 2010, compared to 95 per cent for the whole of Latin America. Further, net enrolment rates at the primary level in Ecuador grew from 68,6 per cent in 1982 to 93,1 per cent in 2004 (Mrazek 2008). These numbers suggest a clear improvement in the access to primary education in Ecuador.

The total NER for all programmes in secondary education (not stated whether lower or upper secondary education or both) in Ecuador was 74 per cent in 2011, compared to 50 per cent in the year 2002. For Latin America and the Caribbean the same total net enrolment rate was 74 per cent in 2010 (UIS 2013b). NER on the secondary level in Ecuador (not stated whether lower or upper secondary education or both) increased from 29,5 per cent in 1982 to 49,2 per cent in 2004 (Mrazek 2008). This shows that there has been considerable progress in access to education also on the secondary level.

Furthermore, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (MEE 2012a) argues that large and radical changes in the education system in Ecuador have recently been conducted and that these changes have their legal basis in a new set of laws. One of these laws is the new Ecuadorian

Constitution which was passed in 2008. This constitution states that the provision of education is an obligation exclusively of the state and that public education is free from the pre-primary level until and including the lower-secondary level. This is an important change as formerly also the public schools in Ecuador charged matriculation fees. In addition, the purchase of uniforms and text books were a burden for poor families. The new constitution permits the government to use resources to eliminate various barriers to the access to education (MEE 2012a). This may for instance include provision of free basic text books and free uniforms for students in certain areas of Ecuador. The current government has also promoted reforms to make sure that the teachers are better qualified in order to receive a job and to maintain their existing jobs (The Economist 2009). Thus, at the same time as large improvements in access to education in Ecuador have been achieved, the government has increased its investment in education, aimed to secure the universal access to education and stated its own responsibility for education. This is confirmed in the *BTI 2012 Ecuador Country Report*, where it is stated that the current government of Ecuador has increased investment in education with the aim of improving opportunities in the mid- to long term (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012).

Private education

Regarding private education, the AKF team (2007) explains that there has been a strong prevalence of “non-state” provision of education in Latin-America for many years. Numbers from UNESCO Institute for Statistics show that enrolment in private education in Ecuador for the year 2011 was 26 per cent on the primary level, a number which has decreased from 29 per cent in 2006 (UIS 2013b). According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2012) the share of private enrolment in primary education in the whole of Latin America was 16 per cent in 2010. However, these numbers need to be read with some caution. Nothing is said in any of the statistics about which type of provider is delivering the private education service. As previously mentioned, many schools operate across the public-private division and it is difficult to know whether these schools get counted as private or public (AFK-team 2007).

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education argues that the new set of laws which was mentioned in the previous section is novel also because the rights of the students in private and semi-private education are secured in a way which was formerly not done. The “Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural” (LOEI, “Organizational and Intercultural Education Law”) which

was passed in 2011, states that teachers, staff and parents in all types of schools, not only the public, are now prohibited from executing certain actions which can negatively affect the rights of the children, such as expelling students from school without any justified reason (MEE 2012a).

Further, LOEI ratifies that the state shall control the charge of tuition and matriculation fees in private and semi-private schools in Ecuador. These are strictly prohibited from charging any financial contributions which are not accepted by the national education authorities (MEE 2012a). The headmasters in both of the private schools which are included in this study explain that the private schools have to follow regulations which are stated in the document “Junta Reguladora de Costo de la Educación Particular” (“Regulations of costs in private education”), in which limits are set for how much each private school in Ecuador can charge in matriculation and tuition fees. The limits vary for each school depending, among other things, on the location of the school. A private school in a poor area cannot charge as much in matriculation and tuition fees as a private school in a richer area. Thus, there have been recent improvements and increased involvement and control from the state also in the private education sector in Ecuador.

Challenges and inequality

Despite the improvements described in the previous sections, challenges in the educational system in Ecuador still remain. As was shown, full enrollment in secondary education is yet to be achieved. Further, there are challenges related to late entry to primary schools. Net intake rate (NIR) is defined as new entrants in the first grade of primary education, who are of the official school-entrance age, expressed as a percentage of the population of the same age (UIS 2009). In 2011 the total NIR to primary education in Ecuador was 75 per cent (UIS 2013d). This means that a substantial amount of pupils in Ecuador enter primary school either too early or too late. The total over-age (at least one year) net intake rate for primary education in 2011 was 20 per cent, while the similar under-age net intake rate was 11 per cent in the same year (UIS 2013d), showing that late entry to primary education in Ecuador is more common than too early entry. Furthermore, the total gross graduation ratio for all programmes in lower secondary education in Ecuador was 78 per cent in 2011 (UIS 2013c). The challenge of insufficient completion of lower-secondary school in Ecuador is also mentioned in Lizarazo (2007). The Global Education Digest (2012) argues that children with

late entry to school are in greater risk of also leaving school early. The combination of late entry to primary school and insufficient completion of lower secondary school shows that this may be the case also in Ecuador.

Studies indicate that challenges of low enrolment in schools are more present among the poorest populations of Ecuador as well as among the ethnic minorities. Numbers from SIISE; (*National System of Social Indicators of Ecuador*), from the year 2000 (cited in Mrazek 2008), show that the gap in net enrolment rates in education between the wealthiest and poorest population in Ecuador was 10 percentage points for the primary level and 60 percentage points for the secondary level. As for ethnic groups, the enrolment rates on the primary level were 92 per cent for whites, 85 per cent for the indigenous and 83 per cent for the Afro-Ecuadorian population. On the secondary level, enrolment rates were 54 per cent, 22 per cent and 31 per cent for the same groups respectively. Similar numbers are given by Vos & Ponce (2004) for the year 2001.

Although these numbers are not recent and the general enrolment rates in education in Ecuador have increased, there is reason to believe that there are still substantial inequalities between different parts of the population. In, the *Informe de Progreso Educativo Ecuador* (2010) and in Mrazek (2008) it is stated that the equity issue in education is an area where Ecuador is actually currently moving backwards. Somensatto (2008) and the *BTI 2012 Ecuador Country Report* (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012) argue that generally, inequalities and lack of opportunities continue to be a major characteristic of the social and economic structure in Ecuador. Moreover, statistics from the *Ecuadorian National Institute for Statistics* (INEC) for the year 2008 (described in *Informe de Progreso Educativo Ecuador*, 2010), show that the poorest quintile of the Ecuadorian population has an average monthly income of 30 US dollars (the local currency in Ecuador) and an average of 6,7 years of schooling. The richest quintile of the Ecuadorian population has an average monthly income of 493 US dollars and an average of 14,2 years of schooling.

2.2 The geographic location of the study

Guayaquil is the largest city in Ecuador with a population of 2,5 million inhabitants, of which 60 per cent live in areas classified as “slums” with substandard housing and lack of land rights (Rasmussen 2011). The schools in which field research for this study was conducted are all

located in the Northwest part of Guayaquil. This location was chosen because it is one of the poorest parts of the city. Córdova, Rosillo & Whist (2009) explain that this area is mainly made up of immigrant population from several provinces of Ecuador. There is for instance a significant indigenous population from the highlands (the “Sierra”). The settlements in this area are relatively new (15-20 years) and the immigration is caused by poverty in the rural sectors and the need to find jobs. Most people are involved in informal work in trade and construction.

INEC (2010) divides Guayaquil into various zones. The five schools included in this study are situated in two of these: zone “V” and zone “W”. The statistics from the year 2010, given by INEC (2010), show that zone “V”, has a total population of 110 311 inhabitants and zone “W” has a total population of 121 609 inhabitants. These two zones have quite similar characteristics. For instance, in zone “V”, out of a total of 27 866 houses, only 11 069 (40 per cent) are connected to the public water-net. 15 872 (57 per cent) houses get their water from an ambulant water-service. The rest get water from dwellings, rain-water or the river. In comparison, in two of the richest zones of Guayaquil, which have a population of 10 346 and 17 972 inhabitants respectively, 98 per cent and 99,7 per cent of the houses are connected to the public water-net respectively. And in the whole city of Guayaquil, 85,4 per cent of the houses are connected to the public water-net.

In zone “V”, 3,8 per cent of the total population above the age of five do not have any education. The same number for zone “W” is 4,4 per cent. It is not specified specifically which age group this percentage applies to. This means that it can include both children in the official school age who do not attend school and persons above the school age who never attended school. In comparison, in the same two richer zones of Guayaquil, 0,3 per cent and 0,5 per cent respectively, of the population above the age of five, do not have any education. For the whole city of Guayaquil, 2,6 per cent of the population of the same age group do not have any education.

Education in the geographic location of the study

The geographic location of this study, the Northwest part of Guayaquil, has been characterized by an insufficient public education system, both in terms of lack of public schools and lack of educated and certified teachers. There have been more private than public schools in these areas. Many of the private schools have been of varying quality and also too

expensive for many of the inhabitants (Tiepolo 2007, Córdova et al 2009). However, as explained previously, the Ecuadorian government has recently increased its investment in public education and this spending has largely been pro-poor. An employee in the Norwegian Mission Alliance (MANE) explains that because of the recent improvement in the public education system, there is now a considerable demand for public education in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil and parents now generally have more trust in the public education system than they had before. Still, many children do not get access to the public schools because these schools are full. This may imply that the problem of late entry into primary schools is present in these areas. Various sources, including the headmasters in two of the public schools included in this study, relate that parents often line up outside the public schools days in advance in order to obtain access for their children. Thus, although more public schools have recently been built, there is still insufficient provision of public education in the poor areas of Guayaquil. Moreover, an employee in the Sub-Secretary of Education in Guayaquil explains that many private schools in Ecuador, especially in the poor areas, have previously operated “illegally” without permission from the government. This means that there was no control with the quality of these schools. However, as explained previously, the Ecuadorian government now intervenes more also in private education and the general quality of private schools in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil has therefore improved.

INEC (2010) provides the numbers of inhabitants above the age of five who are enrolled in “regular education” in the various zones of Guayaquil. The term “regular education” is not defined, thus it might include both primary and secondary education. These numbers might also include people above the official school-age who assist compulsory education. In zone “V”, of all the inhabitants above the age of five who are enrolled in “regular education”, 64 per cent attend public schools and 34 per cent attend private schools. In zone “W”, 64 per cent attend public schools and 33 per cent attend private schools. In both zones there is in addition a very small percentage of students who attend semi-private religious schools or schools which are run by the municipality of Guayaquil (INEC 2010).

In two of the richest zones of Guayaquil, of the inhabitants above the age of five who assist “regular education”, 91,7 per cent and 84,9 per cent attend private schools respectively. The rest go to public schools. In the whole city of Guayaquil, 58 per cent of the students attend a public school, 39,3 per cent attend a private school, 2,1 per cent attend a semi-private religious school and 0,1 per cent attend a municipality school (INEC 2010). These numbers

show that private education is dominant in the richer areas of Guayaquil. As previously mentioned, due to the regulations of costs in private education, private schools in these areas can charge significantly higher tuition fees than the private schools in the poorer areas.

In the poorer areas of Guayaquil and for the city on average, public education has a larger share of students (around 60 per cent), but there is also a significant share of inhabitants (30 - 40 per cent) who attend private schools. The higher number of students in the public schools in the poorer parts of Guayaquil does however not mean that there are now more public than private schools in these areas. Employees in the Sub-Directorate of Education and MANE explain that there still exist more private primary and secondary schools. The private schools are however smaller and have fewer students. The number of students in each class is also generally much lower than in the public schools. The high number of students in each class in the public schools may influence the quality of the teaching in these schools, since there is usually only one teacher in each class. As explained previously, the Ecuadorian government guarantees the right of education for all citizens and also states its own responsibility for securing this right. The public schools are therefore probably required to include more students than the private schools. There seems to be a dilemma between the obligation to secure the right of education for every child and the obligation to limit the amount of students in each class:

“In the public schools generally there is no limit, you cannot deny matriculation to anyone [...] there are often 60-70 students in one class in a public school. In the private schools there is a limit” (Teacher “Montevideo”, public school).

“The Ministry of Education and the important pedagogical philosophers say that the limit is 45 students in one class. I have 50 students in the third grade, five more than what is allowed. In the sixth grade there are 61 students. I have to include them right?” (Headmaster “Montevideo”, public school).

2.3 Parents’ involvement in education in Ecuador

In the *Informe de Progreso Educativo Ecuador* (2010) it is explained that the majority of the educational decisions in Ecuador have been made at the national level. Each public school, the parents and the surrounding community have limited decision-power and voice regarding what is going on inside the school. Similar information about the private schools was not given in the report. However, another new aspect of the previously mentioned new set of laws

is the aim to increase the active participation of the parents in the educational processes. The Ministry of Education argues that appropriate mechanisms which permit the parents to demand educational services of good quality have historically been lacking in Ecuador. Therefore, the new Ecuadorian constitution states that parents have the right and the responsibility to participate in the educational process. Also, the “Organizational and Intercultural Education Law” (LOEI) states that parents have the right to be heard, the right to participate in the evaluation of teachers and the administrative leadership of the school, and also participate in the evaluation of the administrative and educational processes in the school, which may include evaluations of the school’s budget (MEE2012a). This applies to parents in all types of schools; private, semi-private and public.

Moreover, in January 2010, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education was restructured and this included processes of decentralization of decisions from the central ministry to educational authorities at local levels. One part of this decentralization process is the obligation to establish a “Gobierno Escolar” (“School Government”) in each public school in Ecuador (MEE 2013a). This is a committee consisting of representatives of the parents, students, teachers and administration of the school (MEE 2012a). The LOEI states that the “Gobierno Escolar” is the primary place for parents and the local community to participate in the school and observe and evaluate the administrative leadership and management of the school. Further, the LOEI specifies in a concrete manner how the “Gobierno Escolar” shall function, for instance who shall be included as members (students, parents, teachers and staff), how often there should be elections of the committee and how often it is supposed to meet. It is also specified concrete tasks which the committee is supposed to work with, such as participating in elaborating the school’s annual education plan and participate in conflict solving. LOEI states that parents in general, not only in public schools, have the right to elect and be elected into parents’ committees (MEE 2012a). However, it is only in the public schools that the functioning of the central parents’ committee (the “Gobierno Escolar”) is specified in more detail by the government.

Who participates?

Different surveys have, in various ways, aimed to measure the degree of parents’ involvement in education in Ecuador. There is evidence that participation in meetings of civil society organizations (including parents’ associations) in the country has generally declined over time

(Seligson M.A., Donoso, J.C., Montalvo D. & Orcés D. 2011). The most recent data on civic participation in Ecuador from 2012 also reports low attendance at meetings in parents' associations (Hinton, Moseley & Smith 2012). Despite the low levels, parents' associations still rank as the second type of organization in which Ecuadorians are most active, only preceded by religious organizations (Seligson et al 2011).

Further, findings show that in Ecuador and on the American continent in general women present a higher participation than men in parents' associations (Seligson et al 2006, Cruz 2009). Similarly, MANE (2012) has conducted a survey in the geographic location of this study, in which a large amount of the respondents answer that it is the women who attend the school meetings and help their children with the homework. Also, findings suggest that female homemakers participate more in parents' associations than men and female non-homemakers (Hinton et al 2012). Seligson et al (2006) explain that areas in Ecuador that were considered rural have recently been incorporated into urban areas. This has caused the economic activity of the population to increase, something which demands more hours of work from the population and leaves less time for community participation. Thus, having a job appears to influence participation in parents' associations negatively.

In addition, findings show that Ecuadorian citizens with higher levels of education are tending to participate much more in civil society than those with less education (Cruz 2009, Hinton et al 2012, Seligson et al 2006). When it comes to ethnicity, indigenous people in Ecuador participate most. Those who identify themselves as whites are much less inclined to take part in community organizations compared to those of mixed ethnicity (Seligson et al 2006). However, the impact of skin colour on the level education is notable in Ecuador. That is, people with lighter skin have higher education (Hinton, N., Rodríguez M., Pereira B.F. & Smith A.E. 2012). It seems therefore to be the case that education boosts community participation only *within* the populations of mixed or indigenous ethnicity in Ecuador. The group with highest levels of education, that is, people with lighter skin, still participate the least. This means that it is only the individual level of education that seems to increase engagement in schools in Ecuador, not the average level of education for the ethnic or national group a person belongs to. This is supported by surveys which show that Ecuador as country has higher levels of parent involvement in schools than countries such as the United States and Canada which have higher national levels of education in the population (Cruz 2009).

3 Literature review

In this chapter an overview will be provided of literature on the two mayor topics of this study: parents' involvement in education and private / public schooling. The first section will elaborate on what the literature says about the importance of parents' involvement in the school. The following section will focus on literature on private and public education for poor people in low-income areas. In the introduction chapter, the argument was made that there is lack of studies which combine these two areas and that this study aims to make a contribution to this void.

3.1 The importance of parents' involvement in the school

As described in the introduction chapter, the World Bank Source Book on Social Accountability (The World Bank 2013) emphasizes the positive effects of parents' participation in schools, especially in a marginalized context. Also studies by Di Gropello (2006) and Henderson & Berla (1994) were mentioned, which conclude that parents' involvement can positively affect student achievement. This is also emphasized by Dunne, Akyeampong & Humphrey (cited in Essuman & Akyeampong 2011).

Furthermore, Henderson & Berla (1994) argue that there are several benefits of parents' involvement also for the families, the school and the community. For instance, when parents get involved in school, the teachers they work with have higher opinions of them as parents and higher expectations of their children. Similarly, schools that work well with families also have higher ratings of teachers by parents, more support from families and better reputations in the community. Similarly, Shaeffer (1992) argues that in addition to participation of new actors being a "means" to better education, it can also be an "end" in itself. On the individual level participation can among other things lead to changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills among those who participate (e.g. the parents). On the community level, it can for instance lead to the formation of alliances and networks. Finally, on the social level, participation can have outcomes such as greater equity of benefits. It is therefore clear that parents' participation can have benefits for various parts, not only for the children in the school.

There are several scholars who argue that community participation in education is important for improving accountability, which the poor and marginalized populations will benefit from (Essuman & Akyeampong 2011, Khan 2006). Accountability can be defined as “the obligation of power-holders to account for or take responsibility for their actions”. Further, in a democracy a fundamental principle is that citizens have the *right* to demand accountability and public actors have an *obligation* to be accountable. *Social* accountability refers to “the broad range of actions and mechanisms, beyond voting, that citizens can use to hold the state to account, as well as actions on the part of the government, civil society, media and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts” (The World Bank 2013).

However, there are also scholars who have questioned the potential positive outcomes of parents’ involvement in schools, especially in regards to involvement in various types of parent committees. In relation to decentralization strategies in education in Ghana, Hedges 2002 (cited in Essuman & Akyeampong 2011) explains that the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) was expected to be the new “dynamic into school/community relations”. In the statements of the roles and responsibilities of PTAs and SMCs in Ghana, there are the aspirations that these decentralization strategies could be a vehicle for improving the enrolment and retention of pupils, maintenance of school facilities, the learning environment and the overall quality and long-term impact of education on the community (Addae-Boahene & Arkoful 1999, cited in Essuman & Akyeampong 2011). However, Essuman & Akyeampong (2011) argue that difficult relations between PTAs and the teachers’ occupational culture are often ignored. Further, they explain that critics of decentralization in education point out that shifting certain state responsibilities to the local level may actually harm the poorest communities as they are the ones who possess limited resources and skills to fulfill the new responsibilities of decentralization policy.

Similarly, in relation to PTAs in Latin America, Wolff & de Moura Castro (2001) explain that such associations have existed for decades in the region. Most commonly, these associations serve a social role in the organization of festivities and graduations. Sometimes they raise money for school activities or to finance renovations or purchase learning materials. At their best, PTAs can aid and support teachers and school directors and hold them accountable. Sometimes they can even complain to higher authorities or to the media. However, the authors argue that such a proactive role of PTAs might be hampered by the fact that in poor

neighborhoods, many parents may be semiliterate and this might influence their contribution in a proactive Parent-Teacher Association.

Also Khan (2006) has examined thirty-three studies on the work of school councils (which include parents) in twenty developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, most of which were completed between 1990 and 2001. He explains that the studies report tremendous variations regarding who participates in the school councils and how. Still, some of them provide evidence that the ones who are most likely to serve in councils are the affluent and educated. These are more likely to interact better with the school director and teachers and play a larger role in decision-making. The poor and less-educated often find it difficult to express their needs or to be heard. And although women do participate, in some places they are relatively under-represented. Further, regarding to decision-making, Khan (2006) suggests that school councils tend to limit themselves to administrative functions. Decisions related to classroom pedagogy and curricula are infrequent.

However, Khan (2006) also found that changes are occurring and in many places, school councils are gradually opening up to groups previously excluded. He explains that one of the forces that make school councils more inclusive is decentralization reforms where autonomy in decision-making power is being transferred to local communities. When governments in developing countries decentralize education, a strategy of first resort is to increase community participation by establishing school councils that include parents. The underlying assumption is that community participation will result in schools with improved governance and more accountability. Thus, decentralization in education might be one way of increasing parents' participation in school. As explained in the introduction chapter, evidence from the "EDUCO" project in El Salvador has proved positive influence of decentralization programs involving parents' participation on students' achievement (The World Bank 2013, Di Gropello 2006). Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter two, decentralization reforms in education in Ecuador have also recently been conducted, which aim to include the parents (MEE 2013a). Despite his review, Khan (2006) argues that while community participation in councils has been analyzed in the industrialized world, there is need for more research and empirical evidence in developing countries, concerning what such councils actually do. More research is also needed on for instance the extent to which the poor and less-educated contribute to any or all decisions.

3.2 Private and public education

“Private education” is a diverse term which takes a variety of forms and might be used differently by different authors. Belfield & Levin (2002, p.19) provides this definition: *“the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies”*.

Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio & Guáqueta (2009) explain that private education providers include a range of school operators including faith-based organizations, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private for-profit and not-for profit schools.

Similarly, the AFK-team (2007) explains that where there has been analysis of non-state roles in education, it has often been characterized as centring around two very different types of provision; either a) provision by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the aim of ensuring education for under-served groups who may be missed by the state system, or b) elite, high-quality private institutions for those who can afford them. The authors agree that non-state education ranges from “first choice” (catering to the elite) to “only-chance” (those not reached by public provision and for whom non-state providers are crucial). However, they argue that these types are just two ends of the spectrum of non-state education and that the situation in between is far more complex.

The AFK-team (2007) explains that the private, for-profit schools for poor children, is the current most rapidly expanding and contentious sector across developing countries. The interest in various types of non-state provision of education, including such private for-profit schools, has grown as the search for alternative ways to reach the “Education for All” (EFA) goal has increased. This is supported by Rose (2011), Belfield & Levin (2002) and Patrinos et al (2009), which explain that various private providers are playing an increasingly important role in delivering education to low-income families. Tooley & Dixon (2005) and Patrinos et al (2009) point to studies from African and Asian countries which show that various types of private schools have been flourishing in low-income areas due to the deteriorating quality or lack of public education. Still, the AFK-team (2007) argues that discussions and efforts to meet the EFA-goals, for instance in narrative reports at the national and international level, have focused largely on government provision of education. It therefore appears to be need for more literature on private education in marginalized areas.

Moreover, the AFK-team (2007) argues that there is insufficient robust data comparing the relative quality of public and private provision of education for the poor. Still, they argue that it is likely that the range of what is on offer in low-cost private fee-paying schools goes from the horrifying to the remarkable, just as in public or NGO schools. In order to underline this point, the authors quote various studies with mixed results from around the world. Wolff & de Moura Castro (2001) explain that most research show that private school students at primary and secondary school level on the American continent perform better than their public education peers in the same country, on standardized tests and other measures such as school retention. However, these within country differences diminish significantly after controlling for the socioeconomic status of the private school students and are further reduced when other factors such as physical factors of the schools are included. This implies that it is the advantaged background and the better facilities of the private schools which make for the good results. In low-income areas where there socio-economic background of the inhabitants is quite homogenous and where the private schools do not have better facilities, the difference between the private and public schools in terms of student performance may therefore be less pronounced.

The studies described in this section focus mostly on the quality of fee-paying private and public schools in poor areas. As previously argued, a comparison of parents' involvement in these different types of schools is lacking. Still, in the literature on private and public education for poor people, some issues are mentioned which are relevant for the comparison of parents' involvement in the two different types of schools. The AFK-team (2007) mentions a qualitative study conducted by Lall in 2002, of 10 small private schools catering to low- to middle-income families in the disadvantaged areas of Jaipur. The study shows that parents felt that the teachers in the private schools spent more time with, and were more concerned with, their children and their progress, than teachers in the government schools. They linked this to increased accountability in the private schools. Similarly, research from India conducted by Tooley (2001, cited in AFK-team 2007) found that low-cost, private sector providers of education offer better quality at lower cost than state providers of education. The author attributes much of this difference to private fee paying schools' direct accountability to parents.

Tooley & Dixon (2005) compare public schools and private unaided schools (not supported by any philanthropic organization) in low-income areas in India, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.

Their study makes some interesting observations related to teachers' commitment. The authors explain that when they made unannounced visits to the schools, a larger percentage of the teachers in the private schools were actually teaching. Further, they found a much higher level of teacher absenteeism in the public schools. Still, teachers' salaries in the government schools were generally three times higher than in the private unrecognized schools. This might imply that teachers in public schools are paid irrespective of their performance or even whether or not they show up. The AFK team (2007) elaborates on the study of Tooley & Dixon (2005) and argues that there is less incentive for parents to monitor teachers and for the teachers to be responsive in public schools compared to private schools where parents are paying the teachers' salaries. Fee-paying schools would have an inherent accountability mechanism which public schools do not have. This is interesting because the authors imply that there might be a difference in the extent to which parents hold the teachers to account in private and public schools. Also, they argue that when parents' monitor the teachers, this might positively affect the teachers' attendance and commitment in school which in turn will improve the school quality.

Tooley & Dixon (2005) also point to other studies which attribute the deterioration of government schools to the lack of teacher accountability. Similarly, Wolff & De Moura Castro (2001) argue that because private schools are self-governing, they better reflect the preference of parents and students. Similarly, the AFK-team (2007) argues that the difficulties with direct service provision of education by the state often have to do with the centralized nature of school systems. This may result in the public schools being unable to reach the most marginalized, respond to the needs of communities, be accountable and transparent, or provide a good quality of education.

In sum, these studies suggest that there are more accountability and better opportunity for parents' participation in the private schools, compared to public schools, in low-income areas.

4 Analytical framework

To guide the analysis and discussion of parents' involvement in private and public schools in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil, this study will use the Social Capital Theory. It will be concerned with the relationships and networks that are brought into existence as a result of parents' involvement in schools and how these can provide advantages or benefits for the three parts; the students, the parents and the school itself. This chapter will present the Social Capital Theory and elaborate on why and how it is used in this study.

There are several characteristics of parents which might have an impact on their children's educational situation. For instance, when parents have a high level of education themselves, this can positively affect their children's achievement in school. In addition, social influences may have an important impact. Lauglo (forthcoming 2013) explains that in research on the significance which the family and the family's connection to a network/fellowship have on young people's education, the term "social capital" has been used to point to other factors than the family's connection to social class or the amount of cultural capital within a family, which may have an important influence. In the theory on cultural capital, a point is that children have advantages when their parents are familiar with the cultural content of the school (Lauglo 2010). Lauglo (forthcoming 2013) explains that theory on social capital is a supplement which is meant to broaden the perspective. Social capital is not meant to replace social class or cultural capital as explanatory factors which may have significance for young people's education. But if social capital can compensate for low socio-economic status or lack of cultural capital, it can provide another explanatory source for differences in children's educational situation (Lauglo 2010).

Lauglo (2010) explains that the three most important founders of Social Capital Theory are Pierre Bordieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. For these three scholars, the core of the term "social capital" is social relations or networks which share common values, understandings of reality and norms about reciprocity. "Actors" will gain advantages of participating in such networks. Putnam uses James Coleman's definition of social capital as a starting point for his work, whereas Coleman appears to have developed his theory on social capital independently of the earlier work of Pierre Bordieu. Further, Bordieu did not do research on the significance of social capital for young peoples' educational achievement, whereas Coleman sees social capital as being of value for young peoples' success in school

(Lauglo 2010). This study will be concerned with the work of Coleman and Putnam. Wall, Ferrazzi & Schryer (1998, cited in Goddard 2003) explain that the contributions of these two scholars to the formation of Social Capital Theory have been central to the widespread appeal of this construct among educational researchers and policymakers. Coleman's definition of social capital will be described, with additional references to Putnam when it is relevant. Other authors who have elaborated on the work of these two scholars or cooperated with them will also be referred to.

When defining social capital, Coleman (1988) takes "rational action" as a starting point. Each "actor" has goals independently arrived at, acts independently and wholly self-interested. Further, each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events. Social capital is a particular kind of such resource available to an actor. Further, social capital can be a variety of entities which have two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors, this might be persons or corporate actors, within this structure (Coleman 1988). Coleman (1988) argues that all social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital; actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits. He further observes that social capital has both structural and functional components (Coleman & Hoffer 1987). That is, simply knowing someone (the structural component) does not necessarily guarantee productive interaction. Therefore, in addition to the structural aspect of networks, one must also consider the functionality of relationships. Social features such as relational trust and supportive group norms are important functional aspects of social capital (Goddard 2003). In fact, Coleman (1988) sees *trust* as one form of social capital. A group within which there is extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trust.

Thus, Coleman (1988) explains that the concept of social capital rejects the extreme individualistic premises that often accompany "rational action". Rather, it also includes elements from theory which sees action as governed by social norms, rules and obligations and the actor as socialized. Social capital therefore attempts to show how the principle of rational action, in conjunction with particular social contexts, can account not only for the actions of the individuals in particular contexts but also for the development of social organization. Coleman further argues that social capital facilitates productive activity in the same way as other forms of capital (for instance physical capital or human capital). It makes

possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be possible in its absence. But unlike other forms of capital, social capital exists in the *relations* between actors and among actors. It comes about through those changes in the relations among persons that facilitate actions. It is however important to emphasize that according to both Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2001), not all social capital is good. Networks of people, for instance criminal gangs, can also produce social capital that can be put to genuinely destructive ends. Indeed, as any form of capital, all forms of social capital can be used to ends that are in some instances destructive.

Coleman (1988) further argues that social capital that has value for a young person's development can exist both within and outside the family. Coleman & Hoffer (1987) explain that social capital within the family is exemplified by the presence of adults in the household and their degree of interest and involvement in their children's lives. That is, relationships between the parents and their children. The authors mention an example of Asian immigrant mothers in the USA who purchased an extra copy of their children's textbook. This was bought for the mother to study in order to be able to help her child do well in school. The authors further explain that this is a case in which the human capital of the parent is low, but the social capital available for the child's education is extremely high. The child might benefit from the mother's involvement in terms of improved school results, even though the mother does not have education herself. This shows that it is not only wealth, social class or the extent of human or cultural capital of the parents that is important for various kinds of improvement in their children's educational situation. The relations between the various parts in the network; in this case between parents and their children, can also give substantial benefits for the various parts involved.

Outside the family, Coleman (1988) explains that social capital can be found in the social relationships that exist among parents and in the parents' relations with the institutions of the community. In the educational context I will argue that these institutions would be the school. Putnam (1995, p. 69) argues that "parental involvement in the educational process represents a particularly productive form of social capital". When it comes to social relationships that exist among parents, Coleman (1988) describes surveys conducted in the United States in 1980 and 1982 which showed that religiously based private high schools were surrounded by a community based on religious organization. These communities consisted of families with intergenerational closure. That is, relations within a generation. The parents of the children in

the school know each other and collaborated with each other. Coleman (1988) explains that the existence of intergenerational closure provides a quantity of social capital available to each parent in raising his or her children. This is further beneficial in school-related matters. The religious private high schools in the mentioned surveys had much lower dropout rates than public schools and other private schools with no religious affiliation. Coleman (1988) further claims that this suggests that social capital in the adult community surrounding the school has significance for the level of dropout. The results of the study were robust after controlling for other factors such as the parents' job situation and level of education (Lauglo 2010). Although none of the schools included in this current study are religiously based, it will still be relevant to explore the relationships among the parents in these schools and the degree of intergenerational closure and discuss the potential benefits of these networks.

Regarding the parents' relationships with the school, Coleman & Hoffer (1987) explain that parents can constitute a resource for the schools, but only if they are involved with the school or involved with one another on matters concerning the children and the school. Coleman also argues that mentioned difference between the religious-based private schools and the public schools is also a result of stronger connection between the school and the parents in the religious-based private high-schools (Lauglo 2010). Further, Coleman & Hoffer (1987) argue that the social capital that exists in the community and its power to make and enforce norms for the youth of the school, is not fixed and immutable but can also be affected by the actions of the school. That is, the school has a role in facilitating collaboration with and among the parents and the formation of networks and relationships.

Putnam and Goss (2002) explain that social capital can be a private good and a public good at the same time. When social capital is a private good, the networks have value for the people who are in them. Thus, there are private or "internal" returns of parents' involvement. When parents help their children with homework, it is their own children who directly benefit from it. In addition there can be public or "external" returns of the involvement. For example, the school and all of its students might benefit from a well-functioning parents' association, even though there are only a few parents who actually involve themselves in the association. Further, Coleman & Hoffer (1987) argue that the public return of social capital is an effect which in some cases might reduce the incentive for parents to get involved in the school. They explain that social capital of the sort that is valuable for a young person's education do not benefit primarily the persons whose efforts would be necessary to bring them about. As

mentioned, the existence of a parents' association is often the result of the effort of a few persons. These might be mothers who do not hold a full-time job outside the house. Yet, these mothers themselves experience only a subset of the benefits associated with the parents' association. Rather, in many cases all the parents and the students in the school would benefit. This might reduce the incentive for the mothers to get involved. From their personal point of view, it would be an entirely reasonable action if one of them decided to abandon her activities in the association in favour of a full-time job. The benefits of this new job for her and her family may outweigh the losses of not involving in a parents' association. But her withdrawal would constitute a loss for all the other parents and students in the school (Coleman & Hoffer 1987).

Coleman emphasizes that family-based social capital is distributed fairly equally among different social classes. Therefore, this type of social capital can be an important support for children from poor families or families which are in lack of cultural capital (Lauglo 2010). Lauglo (2010) explains that Coleman's uses social capital as an interesting explanatory factor for social mobility in education, particularly for children from poor families. Further, Woolcock and Narayan (cited in Putnam & Goss 2002) argue that those communities which have a diverse stock of social networks and civic associations are in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability. Further, as described in chapter two, Cruz (2009) shows that developing countries in Latin America have higher levels of parent participation than developed countries. He argues that these findings suggest that people in underdeveloped societies tend to make use of social networks more than those in wealthier societies in an effort to overcome their lack of resources. People seek out engagement in schools as a way to increase their own social opportunities. Further, Coleman (1988) explains that there are various differences in social structures which have implications for the extent of social capital within that structure. There are for instance differences in the actual needs that persons have for help and in the existence of other sources of aid, such as government welfare services. In marginalized areas where people are vulnerable and where there might be lack of welfare services, there is likely to be more need for stronger networks which can facilitate social capital.

This study is concerned with a part of Guayaquil, Ecuador which is characterized as marginal and where level of education among the population, is lower than in the richer parts of the city. This was shown in the statistics given by INEC (2010), in chapter two. Thus, it is

interesting and relevant to analyze parents' involvement in this part of Guayaquil in light of the Social Capital Theory. Therefore, this study will explore the relations and networks that are brought into existence as a result of parents' involvement in the schools. This might be relations between parents and their children, between parents and the teachers/headmaster and also networks among the parents in the school. Thus, social capital both within and outside the family will be analyzed. Further, it will be explored how these relations and networks can be a resource for the three parts: the students, the parents and the school. That is, how these networks can give them certain advantages or benefits in achieving various ends. Moreover, social capital will be studied and compared in private fee-paying schools and public schools which are free of charge. The aim is to explore whether and how there are differences between these two types of schools in terms of the extent and type of networks and relationships among parents.

In addition, this study will discuss factors that facilitate or prevent parents' involvement in the private and public schools. In this discussion, an additional analytical framework used in Silva-Leander (2007) will be adopted. In Silva-Leander (2007), civil society's role in Ecuador is examined. On the one hand, the authors discuss factors that are internal to civil society and which can facilitate its role, such as its members' capacity to voice their demands. On the other hand, also external factors that create an enabling environment are examined, for instance opportunities provided by the state for citizens to engage in policy making. In the same way, this study will examine characteristics of the parents (internal factors) as well as characteristics of the environment (external factors) which might have an influence on the involvement of parents in schools. An example of the latter case is when individuals choose or are forced to deploy their resources in other places than the school, for instance in demanding jobs. In this case, their amount of social capital is likely to decrease (Putnam & Goss 2002). That said, it is important to emphasize that parents can acquire social capital in other places than the school, for instance in the place where they work.

Finally, this study will have a wide view of various possible benefits of relationships and networks in the school. That is, social capital is not only directly beneficial for children's educational achievement, but also for the total educational situation. For instance, when parents collaborate in order to improve the school's infrastructure, this is joint social action which will be of benefit for the children, although it will not necessarily be shown directly in improved school results.

5 Methodology

This chapter will first describe and justify the choice of research strategy and research design and the methods for sampling of research participants and schools. Limitations related to external, internal and ecological validity will also be outlined. Next, the choice of data collection and analysis methods will be described and justified. Finally, it will be outlined how ethical considerations have been met in the research process.

5.1 Research strategy

This study makes use of qualitative research strategy. Ary et al (2010) explains that this type of research employs words and images to answer questions, rather than numeric data as is common in quantitative research. In the investigation of parents' involvement in primary schools, this study is concerned with the perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders; parents, teachers and headmasters. The focus is on how they understand their situation. It is therefore ideal to present the findings in this study in the form of the stories and accounts of the respondents. This can further be related to the interpretative epistemological position which states that the subject matters of social sciences; people and their institutions, are fundamentally different from the subject matters of the natural sciences. Therefore they have to be studied in a different way. Social reality has a meaning for human beings and people act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others. It is therefore the task of the social scientist to explore these meanings and interpret people's actions and social worlds from their point of view (Bryman 2008).

Further, this study holds a constructivist ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings do not exist independently of social actors but are continually being accomplished and constructed by social actors and through social interaction (Bryman 2008). This study aims to explore how the various stakeholders (parents, teachers, headmasters) interact together and form relationships and networks. That is, how and why they construct social phenomena. Regarding the relationship between theory and research, this study will have an inductive approach, where concepts and theories are *outcomes* of research rather than something that is to be tested, as in a deductive approach (Bryman 2008). This study aims to obtain a general understanding of parents' involvement in private and public schools in a particular context.

5.2 Research design

This study uses a comparative research design which is the study of two contrasting cases using more or less identical methods. That is, it takes the form of a multiple-case study where the emphasis tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting. By choosing a meaningful contrast the significance of different patterns for the experiences of the research participants could be explored (Bryman 2008). The contrasting cases in this study are private and public primary schools and the specific characteristics of these two types of schools are in mayor focus. The aim is to see how the private/public distinction has an impact on parents' involvement in the schools and thus gain a deeper understanding of these two different settings.

Ary et al (2010) explain that qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables and the goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding. Further, qualitative research assumes that human behaviour is always bound to the context in which it occurs. This study will therefore have a focus on the common marginalized context of two contrasting cases (private and public primary schools). However, Dyer & Wilkins (cited in Bryman 2008) argue that a multiple-case study approach tends to mean that the researcher pays less attention to the specific context and more to the ways in which the cases can be contrasted. A challenge of comparative research, and also of this study, may therefore be to keep the simultaneous focus on the contrasting cases and the common contextual background.

5.3 Sampling process

Selection of research participants

The research participants of this study are parents, teachers and headmasters in the various schools. These various types of stakeholders are included so that different perspectives and point of views could be obtained. In addition, relevant information was obtained from staff in the sub-secretary of education in Guayaquil, the sub-directorate of education in Guayaquil and the Norwegian Mission Alliance and “informal” contacts, such as friends and acquaintances. A list of these additional interviewees is included in appendix 3 with date and place for the interviews.

When selecting parents and teachers for interviews, these should ideally be as representative as possible for both the whole group of parents and the whole group of teachers in each of the schools. Then it would be possible to generalize with more certainty from the chosen sample to the wider population of parents and the wider population of teachers. However, I could only select among those who were actually present at each school at the point when I turned up. Due to security reasons there was no opportunity to walk around in the area and search for research participants in their homes. Therefore, a convenience sampling method was conducted for the sampling of both parents and teachers. A convenience sample is the sample which is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility (Bryman 2008). In the case of the parents, it is likely that those who turn up at the school every day are also those who participate and involve most in the school. Their experiences and perspectives on parents' involvement will therefore probably differ from the experiences of the other parents.

However, I tried to select participants as randomly as possible and not only interview those persons who curiously approached me and said that they wanted to be interviewed. These might differ from the other parents or teachers in various ways. They could for instance have a more positive attitude towards the school or they could think that there were certain benefits of being interviewed. This might therefore influence their answers and they would not fairly represent the total parent or teacher population. That said, although I tried to approach both the parents and the teachers before they approached me, participation still had to be voluntary. Bryman (2008) argues that those people who agree to participate in research may differ in various ways from those who disagree to participate. In this study, this applies both to the parents and the teachers.

These issues show that neither the sample of parents nor the sample of teachers is representative of the entire parent and teacher populations in each of the schools. This in turn prevents the ability for generalization to the wider parent and teacher population in the schools. This is an important limitation of this study. In the case of the parents, I would also have preferred a fairly equal representation of fathers and mothers in the sample. In this way, the possible variation in perspectives and experiences between fathers and mothers would be discovered. However, the parents who turned up at school every day were in most cases the mothers. They therefore constitute the majority of the parent research participants in this study and this is another limitation to the representativeness of the sample of respondents. However, one aspect should be noted regarding this issue. I was told by several respondents

that a large problem for many children in the area is that their families have been abandoned by their fathers. Although I do not know the actual figures of female headed households, it is possible that the mothers therefore in fact constitute the majority of the total parent population in each school, since the fathers in many cases are absent. Thus, the fact that most of my research participants are mothers might represent less of a limitation than one would assume. On a few occasions, the parents and teachers preferred to be interviewed together, in groups of two or three. No significant differences in the answers in these interviews from the interviews with only one respondent were noticed.

Selection of schools

The rationale for the choice of the specific location for the research was outlined in chapter two. In the process of selecting the particular schools, purposive sampling was undertaken. This is the most common type of sampling in qualitative research and is to do with the strategic selection of units which are relevant to the research questions being asked. Very often, the aim is to ensure variety, the units should differ from each other in terms of key characteristics (Bryman 2008). Due to the comparative research design of this study, the schools had to differ in one important aspect: they had to be either private or public. Therefore, heterogeneous selection with two different categories of schools was conducted. Five schools were included in the study, two private and three public.

While the schools were selected purposefully to include both private and public providers, within the group of private schools and within the group of public schools, the selection should ideally be as random as possible. This is in order to be able to generalize from the chosen private schools to all the private schools in the area and from the chosen public schools to all the public schools in the area. However, I did not manage to conduct a random selection of schools. There was no available list of all the schools in the area, which means that I did not have a suitable sample frame. Further, due to security reasons I was not able to walk around and randomly visit schools. Therefore I had to rely on my local contacts in the Mission Alliance, a Norwegian based NGO. These took me to private and public schools that they knew of in the area. Thus, the schools included in this study represent more of a convenience sample. That is, the sample which is available to the researcher, similarly to the sample of research participants mentioned in the previous section. The limitation with this sampling method is again that one cannot generalize from the sample to the wider population

of private schools and the wider population of public schools in the area, since it is not known whether the schools included in the samples are representative of these wider populations.

Limitations to the external validity

The selection method of both research participants and schools outlined above constitute a limitation to the external validity of this study and influences the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond the specific research context (Bryman 2008). Further, the findings are determined by that particular area and might not necessarily be applicable to another context. That is, we cannot generalize the findings to another marginalized area in Ecuador or in another country.

Nevertheless, qualitative findings are often not aimed towards generalizability. They tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied. Qualitative researchers usually produce a thick description or rich accounts of the details of a culture. Some scholars therefore argue that *transferability* is a more appropriate measure of qualitative research than external validity. That is, thick descriptions provide others with a “database” for making judgments about the possible transferability of findings to other contexts (Bryman 2008). The aim of this study is therefore to present its findings only as examples of how the situation *might* be in these schools and in a particular marginalized area of Guayaquil. It will only *suggest* that the situation might be similar in other schools and in other marginalized areas.

5.4 Internal validity

Bryman (2008) argues that one challenge with comparative research design is that the differences observed may not be exclusively due to the distinguishing features of the cases. This might limit the internal validity of the findings. Internal validity is concerned with the question of whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables holds water. If one suggests that x causes y , the more confident we are that it is x and not something else that is responsible for variation in y , the stronger the internal validity (Bryman 2008). Similarly, in this study the observed differences between parents' involvement in the schools may be due to other features than the fact that some are private and others are public. It is therefore important to ensure that the other characteristics of the

schools than the private/public distinction are as similar as possible, in order to make these contrasting cases comparable and strengthen the internal validity. The schools included in this study are located fairly close to each other in the same marginalized area. Therefore one can assume that the background and characteristics of the children and their parents are quite similar in other respects than their connection to a private or a public school. This strengthens the internal validity of the findings.

Further, there are many schools in the area of the study, both private and public, which have some kind of relationship with a non-governmental organization (NGO) or religious organization. A school's affiliation with an organization might influence the degree of parents' involvement. For instance, an NGO may encourage parents to participate in the school in various ways. Observed differences in parents' involvement might therefore be due to this NGO affiliation rather than the private/public distinction and this would limit the internal validity of the findings. Schools with NGO or religious affiliation were therefore excluded from the sample. Still, all of the public schools included in this study have *previously* had some kind of relationship with a non-governmental organization. These organizations are JUCONI, Rotary and the Mission Alliance of Norway. This is however a matter of collaboration back in time, so the current influence of these relationships on parents' involvement is probably limited. In addition, a local source related that almost all of the public schools in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil have or have had some kind of relationship with an NGO, and it is therefore difficult to find a school which never had some kind of NGO affiliation. Therefore, I will argue that the public schools included in this study, can be deemed to be quite representative for the public schools in the area. This is not to say that there are no other factors than the private/public distinction which may have influenced parents' involvement in the schools included in this study. However, every effort has been made to strengthen the probability of the internal validity of the findings of this study.

5.5 Interview site

The interviews with the parents should ideally be conducted in their homes, as this is a less "invented" setting than the school. Also, there would be no risk that the teachers or the headmasters should see the parents or hear what they said. The probability that the parents would describe their situation as it was, with no limitations, would therefore probably be stronger if they had not been interviewed at the school. Unfortunately however, due to

security reasons, I neither had the possibility to follow parents to their house, nor to go far away from the schools. The interviews were therefore conducted close to the school gate. This was deemed to be the best available option, though not ideal. However, I always tried to find a place somewhat “hidden”, for instance around the corner. But this was not always possible and the interviews were often interrupted by people passing by. However, I always made sure that no one was over-hearing the interviews.

This issue might limit the ecological validity of the findings of the study. The ecological validity has to do with question of whether social scientific findings are applicable to people’s everyday, natural social settings. The more the researcher intervenes in natural settings or creates unnatural ones, the more likely it is that findings will be ecologically invalid (Bryman 2008). The disturbances and the fact that the interviews were conducted close to the schools, may have constituted an unnatural setting for the parents, which might have prevented them from daring to tell the whole truth, especially when they were asked to relate their negative experiences with the school.

The purpose of the interviews was made clear from the beginning, the role of the researcher as a student from the University of Oslo was specified and anonymity was guaranteed. Still, it might be that some respondents were in doubt about where the information they related would end up. It could be that they thought that their information would be given to the school or to the government. If they were in doubt about the promise of anonymity, it is likely that they would fear negative consequences of expressing negative attitudes towards the school. Finally, it might also be that many of them had never talked to a foreign person before and this may further have made them feel uncomfortable. Still, these limitations should not be over-exaggerated as quite a few respondents actually shared quite negative opinions.

5.6 Data collection methods

The data collection method employed in this study is semi-structured interviewing. In this type of interview, the interviewer typically has a series of questions, but is able to vary the sequence of the questions or ask additional questions. Also, the questions in a semi-structured interview are somewhat more general in their frame of reference than those typically found in a structured interview (Bryman 2008). The reason for choosing semi-structured interviewing as data collection method in this study is that this method has the possibility for a flexible and

emergent design of the interviews. Ary et al (2010) explains that it is necessary to adjust the methods to the subject matter at hand because the researcher can never be quite sure about what will be learned in a particular setting. As a foreigner with limited experience with the Ecuadorian culture and a marginalized context, I was not fully prepared for the reality that would meet me in the research field. It was therefore important for me to include open and general questions in order to learn more about the situation and have the opportunity to add more questions as I obtained more information and knowledge. The interview guides with the full list of interview questions are included in appendix 1 and 2.

In the table below, information about the number of interviews and interviewees in each of the schools is given. Since some parents and teachers were interviewed together, the numbers of interviews is not similar to the numbers of interviewees in all the cases below. The large number of interviews and interviewees in “Cartagena” is due to the fact that many of the parents I met in this school were quite busy and did not have much time to answer all the questions. Therefore, I had to conduct more interviews in order to obtain sufficient information. In “Montevideo” I encountered greater difficulties in meeting parents who were willing to talk to me, therefore the number of parents interviewed in this school is lower than in the other schools. Each of these schools was visited several days during the months of September and October 2012.

School	Interviews	Interviewees				
		Mothers	Fathers	Teachers	Headmaster	Total
“Rosario”	9	5	2	2	1	10
“Havana”	8	5	2	1	1	9
“San Antonio”	8	10	0	2	1	13
“Cartagena”	17	15	1	3	1	20
“Montevideo”	7	2	1	4	1	8

Table 5.1 Number of interviews and interviewees

The native language of all the respondents is the Ecuadorian dialect of Spanish. Although I know Spanish fairly well, I still made use of a translator to make sure that no important details were missed. I did however understand most of what the research participants said and

therefore did not have to rely entirely on the translation. This limits the risk of the findings of this study being less accurate as a result of the interviews being translated.

5.7 Analysis methods

The raw data for analysis are transcripts, summaries and notes from interviews. Since the interviews with the parents had to be conducted outside the school, I did not have the opportunity to use a voice recorder due to security reasons. Instead I wrote notes during these interviews and made a summary of each of them. This is one limitation of the study as it would have been an advantage to have audio recordings, in order to be able to undertake transcriptions of the interviews. During the interviews with the teachers and headmasters however, I could use a voice recorder and I have therefore also managed to conduct a full transcription of these interviews. The coding and analysis of the data started after all the interviews were conducted. The data were organized into items which further were categorized into concepts and categories. The categories correspond to the two research questions and the concepts correspond to the sub-headings in the presentation and discussion of findings in chapter seven and eight.

5.8 Ethical considerations

During the processes of collecting and presenting data, steps have been taken to make sure that no harm has been done to the research participants. All the participants were informed about the whole research process and the purpose of the research. Permission was always obtained before using a voice recorder in the interviews with the teachers and headmasters. In the presentation of the findings, the names of the schools are invented by the researcher and in describing the settings no revealing information is given which could identify the schools. Access to the school site and permission to interview the parents and teachers were obtained from the headmasters in each of the schools before any interviews were conducted. Further, total anonymity was guaranteed to all research participants, also from the translators. As a result no real names are revealed in this thesis.

6 The schools included in the study

Five primary schools are included in this study: two private schools; “Rosario” and “Havana”, and three public schools; “San Antonio”, “Cartagena” and “Montevideo”. These are not the real names of the schools. The schools are located fairly close to each other in a marginalized area in the Northwest part of Guayaquil. Using INEC’s (2010) zonal boundaries described in chapter two, “Rosario”, “Havana”, “Cartagena” and “Montevideo” are located in zone “V”, whereas “San Antonio” is located in zone “W”. As was shown in chapter two, these two zones have fairly similar characteristics when it comes to living standards, level of education, and level of income among the inhabitants. Furthermore, the parents who were interviewed in the private schools did not differ much from the parents in the public schools, regarding level of education and job situation. Thus, I will argue that there is most likely not a significant difference between parents in the private and the public schools regarding level of income.

Concerning the infrastructure and school facilities, no significant differences between the schools were observed. Both the private and the public schools have buildings made of concrete and they all have school yards with a playground for the children. The two private schools are however substantially smaller than the three public schools. Also, as will be shown below, there is a clear indication of lower pupil-teacher ratio in the private schools, compared to the public schools included in this study. As discussed in chapter two, this is also a general tendency in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil. The higher pupil-teacher ratio in the public schools may negatively affect the quality of teaching in these schools, compared to the private schools.

On the other hand, although reforms have been conducted by the government to make sure that the teachers are better qualified, as mentioned in chapter two, a local employee in the Norwegian Mission Alliance explains that teachers in the public schools are usually required to have a higher level of education than the teachers in the private schools, in order to get a job. This might positively affect the quality of teaching in the public schools. Apart from these issues, it is beyond the scope of this study to measure and compare teaching quality and students’ achievement in the schools included in this study. In the following, a more detailed description of the private and the public schools is provided. As will be shown, in addition to lower pupil-teacher ratio in the private schools, another difference between the five schools is that two of the public schools are double-shift schools.

The private schools

The “Regulations of costs in private education” were described in chapter two and apply to all private schools in Ecuador. These regulations set limits for how much each private school can charge in annual matriculation fee and monthly tuition fee. According to the headmasters in both of the private schools included in this study, these limits vary for each school, depending on the average level of income in the area where the school is located. A school in a marginalized area is not allowed to charge as much as a school in a more affluent area. Of the private schools included in this study, “Rosario” is allowed to charge 28 US dollars in monthly tuition fee and 18 US dollars in annual matriculation fee. “Havana” is allowed to charge 14 US dollars in monthly tuition fee and 9 US dollars in annual matriculation fee. This is also confirmed on the webpages of the Ministry of Education, where a list with the names of all the private schools is provided together with the corresponding limits for annual matriculation fees and monthly tuition fees (MEE 2012b). Since “Rosario” is permitted to charge higher fees than “Havana”, it could be that “Rosario” is located in an area which is more affluent than the area where “Havana” is located. Still, both of these schools are located close to each other in a marginalized part of Guayaquil. For comparison, a private school in one of the richest area of the city is allowed to charge more than 300 US dollars in monthly tuition fee (MEE 2012b).

Furthermore, the headmaster in “Rosario” explains that the school actually charges only 12 US dollars in monthly tuition fee and 10 US dollars in annual matriculation fee. At certain times the school allows the parents to pay even less than that. Similarly, in “Havana”, the headmaster explains that the parents pay 13 US dollars in monthly tuition and 8 US dollars in annual matriculation fee. The same is confirmed by the parents in both of these schools. Thus, there is almost no difference between these two schools in terms of what they in reality charge in matriculation and tuition fees. Also, they both charge less than what they are actually allowed to. According to the headmaster in “Rosario”, if the school charged the amount which corresponds to the limit specified in the “Regulations of costs in private education”, the parents would not be able to pay and they would not have any students. Therefore, since the private schools adjust the fees to the income level of the parents in the area and since there is no significant difference in what they actually charge, the parents in “Rosario” and “Havana” do probably not differ significantly in terms of level of income. Since the schools offer fees at reduced price, they can be characterized as private for-profit, low-cost schools, although it is

not known how much profit they make. Both of the private schools included in this study receive the basic text books from the local municipality of Guayaquil. According to the headmaster in “Rosario”, this is the same for all the private schools in the marginalized areas of the city. The parents in all the private schools do however have to buy the school-uniforms for their children.

“Rosario”

According to the headmaster in “Rosario”, this school is financed only with what they receive in annual matriculation fees and monthly tuition fees. This money is used to pay for the salary of the teaching staff, electricity, water, telephone, cleaning etc. The headmaster is the owner of the school. The school has 300 students and nine teachers. There are between 25-40 students in each class.

“Havana”

The headmaster in “Havana” explains that the teachers’ salaries are paid only with what they receive in matriculation fees and the tuition fees. Apart from the text books that the school receives from the local municipality, “Havana” does not receive any financial support from the state or philanthropic foundation. The school has 93 students and 4 teachers. There is multiclass teaching with two and two grades combined (2nd + 3rd grade, 4th + 5th grade and 6th + 7th grade). In each class there are between 20-30 students.

The public schools

It has previously been mentioned that public primary education in Ecuador is free of charge. Still, similarly to the private schools, parents in the public schools have to buy school uniforms for their children. It is however unclear how much these uniforms cost. In all the public schools included in this study, the children’s text books are provided by the state, according to the headmasters. As mentioned in chapter two, in 2010 the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education was restructured and authority was decentralized from the central ministry to various local levels. One part of this decentralization process is the grouping of all schools, the public, the private and the semi-private in a specified area, into one “Circuito Educativo” (“Educational Unit”). Furthermore, all the *public* schools included in this educational unit are attached to one “Entidad Organizativa Desconcentrada” (“Organizational Decentralized

Unit”), which takes care of the financial resources and runs the budget of each of the schools. Before 2010, financial responsibility for each of the school was assumed on the central/national education level (MEE 2013b). According to the headmasters in the public schools included in this study, the “Organizational Decentralized Unit” is one of the secondary schools in the area. All the surrounding primary schools are connected to this secondary school, which receives money from the government. One person (the “colector”) in the secondary school is in charge of allocating money further to each of the public primary schools and obliged to publish their budget on the webpages of the Ministry of Education. Apart from this, a full picture of the amount of financial government contributions per student in the public schools, or per public school in total, has not been possible to obtain for this study.

“San Antonio”

This is a double-shift school with one shift in the morning and one in the afternoon. The two shifts constitute two different schools which have different names and different headmasters and teachers. For this study, the headmaster, teachers and parents of the afternoon shift were interviewed. According to the headmaster, there are no particular differences between the morning and the afternoon shift in terms of teaching. The afternoon shift has 754 students and 12 teachers. With some parallel classes in each grade, there are in total ten classes. The average number of students in each class is not known. However, one of the teachers who was interviewed explains that she has 98 students in her class.

“Cartagena”

This school has 750 students and twenty teachers. The headmaster explains that on average there are 45-50 students in each class.

“Montevideo”

This is a type of double shift school with one morning and one afternoon shift. In contrast to “San Antonio”, the two shifts do however have the same headmaster and is considered to be parts of the same school. Different grades come to school in the different shifts. In total, there are 380 students and 8 teachers in the school. The number of students in each class varies. For instance in the 6th grade there are 61 students and in the 7th grade there are 32 students.

7 Presentation of findings

How do parents get involved in the two different types of schools, private and public?

The respondents in this study were asked how parents generally get involved in the school. In addition they were asked directly about specific types of involvement, such as manual labour and parent meetings. Taken together, the answers revealed some “mayor categories” of parent involvement in the schools. These “mayor categories” correspond to the seven sub-headings in this chapter. For different reasons, some of the parents who were interviewed did not give sufficient answers to all the questions. For example, when asked about how many parents attend parent meetings in the school, some of the parents said that they do not attend those meetings themselves and would therefore not know about the degree of attendance at such meetings. Therefore, the number of parents mentioned in each of the following sections of this chapter, will not always correspond to the number of parents actually interviewed in each school, as outlined in the methodology chapter. In addition, information provided by the parents is not included in some cases where their answers did not differ significantly from those of the headmasters and teachers. Also, the term “respondents” is sometimes used to refer to the parents, teachers and headmasters as one group.

7.1 Financial contributions

*“Since this is a private institution, we try to make the parents help us”
(Headmaster “Rosario”, private school)*

*“We have to do something for this school since it is public”
(Mother “Cartagena”, public school).*

In the previous chapter it was elaborated on financial contributions from the parents in the schools included in this study, in terms of matriculation and tuition fees (in the private schools) and payment for school uniforms (in both types of schools). However, the parents in all these schools, both the private and the public, contribute with additional financial contributions to the school and this is described in the current section. The analysis in the following chapter will discuss how differences among the schools in terms of general financial contributions might influence the extent and forms of parents’ involvement. But

financial contributions can also be seen as a type of involvement in itself, not just something that leads to more or less of other types of involvement. This will be discussed in the analysis as well, with a comparative aspect between the private and the public schools.

The private schools

“Rosario”

The headmaster in “Rosario” explains that once a year the school organizes the “Olympics”, which is a fundraising sport event. A fundraising event can be defined as an event where the aim is to accumulate additional money to the school, for instance in order to improve the school’s infrastructure. This can be done by selling things in the event or charging for the entrance. The school wants the parents to help out in organizing the “Olympics” and also contribute with a small amount of money for the organization of this event.

It appears that “Rosario” is in need of additional financial contributions. For instance, on the question of why she gets involved in the events, one mother answers that it is because the school needs money to complete the building of the new classrooms. Also the headmaster in “Rosario” emphasizes this. However, she says that the school has received considerable opposition from parents when it comes to contributing with money for the “Olympics”. Some parents explain that they also have to pay for the equipment that the children use in this event. One mother says that although this is expensive for many of the parents, the school still requires the children to participate in the “Olympics”.

The headmaster also explains that the government forbids the private schools to organize fundraising events. This is related to the “Regulations of costs in private education” described previously, which set limits for the extent of fees that each private school is allowed to charge from the parents. As mentioned, “Rosario” charges less in monthly tuition than what the school is permitted to according to these regulations. It therefore seems as if, in the headmaster’s opinion, the school can encourage the parents to contribute with money to the annual “Olympics”. Although she says that the government forbids such events, she claims that she is not doing anything illegal and that other private schools organize more fundraising events than her school, for instance bingos. “Rosario” organizes only one fundraising event every year. The reason for this is that they have to consider that the school is located in a

marginal area and that the parents cannot contribute with much money, according to the headmaster.

There are also other types of events in the school, such as the Christmas party and the “Day of the Children”, which might be a financial burden to the parents, although they are not organized in order to accumulate money for the school. Some of the parents explain that they have to pay three US dollars for participation in such events. It is mentioned by several parents that this is very expensive for many of them. In addition, although the local municipality provides the basic text books to the school, one mother in “Rosario” explains that the teachers will ask the parents to buy material, for instance certain books. Some parents will criticize the school for this, because they are not always able to pay for it.

“Havana”

The headmaster explains that although “Havana” receives annual matriculation fees and monthly tuition fees from the parents, there are still needs and necessities in the school. She complains that the income from the fees is not much since the school has to pay insurance for the teachers, in addition to paying them salary. Similarly, one father in “Havana” says that since they do not receive any support from the government, the private schools need more help from the parents than the public schools do. He therefore argues that the parents in the private schools have to get more involved in different ways, for instance with financial support to the school. The headmaster further informs that the parents’ committee in “Havana” investigates the needs of the school and tries to find a way to solve these. For instance, fundraising events such as dance-shows are organized in order to accumulate money to improve the infrastructure of the school. And generally, if something is missing in the classroom, for instance a fan, parents will contribute financially. Also, the parents explain that they pay for the various events which are organized in the school, for instance the Christmas party.

The public schools

“San Antonio”

The headmaster and also some of the parents in “San Antonio” explain that the government forbids the school to organize fundraising events such as bingo or accumulate money to the

school in general. There was a case when the money that the school received from the government was delayed. Some parents then wanted to organize bingo in order to accumulate money for the school. The headmaster had to tell them that this was not allowed.

Still, four of the mothers in “San Antonio” explain that if something is missing in the classroom, for instance a fan, the parents’ committee will ask the other parents to contribute with money. According to three of these mothers, the majority of the parents will contribute in these cases. The last one says that few parents will contribute. Two other mothers explain that mostly the parents do not have enough money to contribute financially to the school. Some of the mothers also explain that the parents’ committee will ask the other parents to contribute with money in order to organize various events (not fundraising events) in the school. They say that the parents are allowed to ask other parents for money, but the teachers are not allowed to do so.

“Cartagena”

The headmaster and the teachers in “Cartagena” explain that it is forbidden to organize any kind of fundraising activities or sell anything in order to accumulate money for the school. The headmaster says that this is only forbidden in the public schools. However, the parents’ committee in the school is allowed to sell things in order to raise funds for the school. In the beginning of this school year, “Cartagena” did not have enough money to pay salary to the school’s cleaner. The central parents’ committee therefore sold small purses to be used together with the school uniforms, in order to pay this salary. The teachers in “Cartagena” explain that the parents sometimes contribute with “something small”. For instance last year a group of mothers bought some plants for the school. However, they say that the school never asks for this, it is a group of parents who do it out of their own initiative. Some of the parents in “Cartagena” also explain that they contribute with small amounts of money, for instance to buy ink for the copy machine. Most of the parents say that the school never asks them for money and that fundraising events are forbidden. However, some of them say that the school asks for money from the parents in order to organize other types of events, but that this contribution is voluntary.

“Montevideo”

The headmaster in “Montevideo” explains that although the parents get involved in various events, such as the “Olympics” sport event, they only contribute with time and work. Since it is a public school they are not allowed to collect any funds from the parents. Still he explains that there are occasions when some parents want to contribute financially when there are certain necessities in the school, such as need for garbage bags or disinfectants for the bathroom. In these cases, the headmaster allows the parents to give money to the school. Also two of the teachers explain that it is forbidden to organize fundraising events in the school. Still, one teacher explains that the members of the parents’ committee will contribute to its maintenance. For instance, they will buy ink for the copy machine. Another teacher explains that the parents’ committee also will encourage the other parents to contribute with money if for instance the copy machine has to be fixed. The answers from the parents who were interviewed in “Montevideo” vary regarding whether they contribute financially to the school. One mother says that the parents sometimes contribute with money to the school. Another says that it is forbidden for the school to ask for money from the parents.

Comparison

These findings show that in all the schools included in this study, both the private and the public, the parents contribute with money to the school, although to varying degrees and in various ways. The total amount of financial contributions from the parents in each of the schools is not known. Still, since they pay annual matriculation fees and monthly tuition fees, the total amount of financial contributions from the parents in the private schools is likely to be greater than in the public schools. However, there also seems to be more *additional* financial contributions from the parents in the private schools than in the public schools. For instance, fundraising events are held in the private schools, whereas this is not the case in the public schools. Since fundraising events are held in order to accumulate money to the school, it is likely that the parents have to contribute with more money in such events, than is the case for non-fundraising events that are also held in the public schools.

Also, the private schools seem to be *asking* the parents to contribute with additional money, whereas the public schools do not do this. For instance, in the private school “Rosario”, there is some evidence that the school asks the parents to pay for certain material and text books. As previously mentioned, the private schools in Ecuador are prohibited from demanding any

financial contributions from the students or their families which are not approved by the national education authorities. It is stated that the same also applies to public schools (MEE 2012a). That is, the private schools cannot charge anything else from the students and their families than matriculation and tuition fees, as stated in the “Regulations of costs in private education”. Related to the answer from the headmaster in “Rosario” however, the private schools might have some leeway in asking for additional financial contributions and arranging fundraising events, depending on how much they charge from the parents in tuition and matriculation fees. If they charge less in fees than what is allowed, as is the case in both of the private schools included in this study, they may be allowed to demand money from the parents in other ways, for instance in relation to the organization of events.

In the public schools, financial contributions from the parents seem to be accepted as long as they are voluntary and on the initiative from the parents themselves and not the school.

7.2 Manual labour and events

“[...] the parents say that because this is a private school, the school has a cleaner... they pay for this. But what they do not have in mind is that the minimum that is charged from the parents is not sufficient, it is not sufficient for the necessities of the school. The parents think that with thirteen dollars we can do something wonderful” (Headmaster “Havana”, private school).

“In the marginal urban areas the parents are of vital importance, because the government gives, but it does not give enough. Therefore the parents are the ones who fix things in the school [...]. The parents’ participation is very important” (Teacher “Montevideo”, public school).

The respondents were asked specifically whether the parents get involved in manual labour in the school. In the answers to this question, the terms “mingas” and “coladas” were frequently mentioned. The first term refers to work done jointly by a group, for instance cleaning, painting or renovation. “Colada” means “drink” and refers to occasions when parents organize the preparation of drinks and sometimes also some kind of food for the children in the school.

The private schools

“Rosario”

“In private education the parents try to involve themselves to the least extent possible [...] because they pay monthly tuition (Headmaster “Rosario”).

The headmaster in “Rosario” explains that the parents in this school never do any work such as cleaning, painting, fixing damaged things or preparing “coladas” for the pupils. She relates this to the fact that the school is private. If for instance some parents or teachers want to improve the infrastructure in the school, it would often happen that other parents complain and say that they pay monthly tuition for this and could therefore not be required to participate. The headmaster also relates this to the previously mentioned “Regulations of costs in private education” and says that the school cannot ask the parents for anything else than what is stated in these regulations. That is, they cannot require parents to help out with manual labour since they pay tuition.

The two teachers who were interviewed in “Rosario” confirm this and say that since the school is private, the parents do not feel that they have to contribute with anything else than paying the matriculation and tuition fees. Also the parents in “Rosario” confirm that they never participate in work such as cleaning or painting the school. On the question of whether the parents prepare “coladas” for the children, two of the parents answered: “No, this is a private school”. But the parents inform that they get involved and help out in events such as the Christmas party, the school ball and the “Day of the Children”. Four of them mention that the majority of the parents participate in organizing these events, and two of them also say that it is obligatory for the parents to get involved in this.

“Havana”

“Some parents think that their only responsibility is to send their children to school, that is all. There is a lack of unity and a lack of responsibility” (Mother, “Havana”).

The headmaster in “Havana” explains that the parents in the school do not participate for instance in cleaning or fixing damaged things. She relates this to the fact that the school is private and she says that the parents emphasize that they pay for the cleaning and therefore they do not want to do the work themselves. Still, the headmaster says that the school needs

more help from the parents. The amount charged from the parents in matriculation and tuition fees is not sufficient in order to sufficiently maintain the school.

“Last year the parents got involved in a small “minga”, painting, but this was the only one, the first and the last, because the parents complained; “we are in private school, not in a public school, in the public schools they do “mingas”, but this is a private school, we are not obliged to participate in this”, this is how the parents think”
(Headmaster “Havana”).

However, the teacher who was interviewed in “Havana” explains that the parents who are members of the parents’ committee have gathered to “solve problems” related to the school. They have for instance painted the tables and the chairs of the school. The parents are more mixed in their answers to how they contribute in the school. Two of them support the headmaster and say that since it is a private school, the parents do not do participate in manual labour. Six other parents however, explain that “mingas” are arranged in the school, although their answers vary as for the frequency of these “mingas”. They all say however, that not many parents show up at these occasions and one mother says that this is the reason why the school is in such a bad condition. The parents also get involved in and organize various events in “Havana”. Two of the mothers explain that the headmaster in “Havana” says that if the parents do not help out in the events, the grades of their children will be lowered. However, they explain that this is said only to scare the parents, it never actually happens.

The public schools

“San Antonio”

The headmaster in “San Antonio” explains that the parents in all the grades will come and help out with the cleaning of the classrooms. Still it varies how often this is done and how many parents help out. It is voluntary to participate in this, according to the headmaster. In the first grade some parents will come to the school every day to clean the classroom. One of the teachers interviewed explains that only about 20 per cent of the parents get involved in the school in general. Still, those who do collaborate, participate for instance in “mingas”. Twice a year, the parents gather to clean and paint the school and also work in order to improve in the area surrounding the school. Out of 750 students, 300 parents will turn up to these “mingas”, according to the teacher. She further says this is a considerable participation in order to get something done. The other teacher interviewed supports this and says that around

200 parents will show up. Still, she explains that many of the parents have four or five children in the school, which means that it is a fairly high level of participation.

The parents in “San Antonio” confirm that “mingas” are organized where parents help out in cleaning the school. Also they say that it is voluntary to participate in these “mingas”. Two mothers explain that there is a cleaner in the school, but he needs help from the parents because he cannot manage the job on his own. One mother explains that when it is needed, a list is made of those parents whose turn it is to help out cleaning the school. She explains that the headmaster tells the parents that if they do not participate in this, this will be marked in the children’s report card. Still, she says that this never happens. The headmaster says this only to make the parents afraid and encourage them to participate.

However, the parents disagree as for how many parents participate in the “mingas”. Four of them explain that the majority participates, whereas four other parents explain that very few parents participate in the “mingas”. One mother explains that it is the parents’ committees in “San Antonio” which organize the “mingas” and that sometimes the members of these committees have to do the work themselves because the other parents do not want to contribute. The teachers and the headmaster explain that the parents also get involved in organizing events, such as the “Olympics”, the Christmas party and “Open house”. However, some mothers explain that there is lack of enthusiasm among the parents to contribute to these events.

“Cartagena”

The headmaster and the two teachers in “Cartagena” explain that the parents get involved in “mingas” and that this is voluntary. They also explain that the majority of the parents participate in this. One of the teachers explains that the school has a cleaner, but since the school is very large he relies on help from the parents. However, outside the school gate there was put a poster with a list of the parents in the first grade who were to clean the classrooms and the bathrooms in the school. Below this list was a quote which pleaded the parents to take part in the cleaning and which claimed that if they did not do this, their children would not be allowed to attend classes. One of the mothers in “Cartagena” also explains that it will be marked in the children’s report card if their parents do not participate in cleaning the school. She says however that she does not know about the consequences of not participating because she herself has always collaborated.

Furthermore, another mother in “Cartagena” explains that in order to get a place for their children in the school, the parents are required to participate in “mingas” before their children are registered. Therefore, formerly this mother sent her children to the nearby private school “Havana”, because neither she nor her husband had time to collaborate in “mingas”, because they had to work. In the private school however, the mother says that the parents just pay, they do not participate in any kind of cleaning, painting, construction etc.

The answers from the other parents in “Cartagena” vary as for how and how often they contribute in various types of work in the school. The majority of them explain that the parents contribute with cleaning the school in some way and a few mentions that this is obligatory. Some parents also explain that they get involved in “mingas” throughout the year where they paint or renovate the school. The answers vary as for how often these “mingas” are held and whether they are obligatory or not. Both parents and teachers in “Cartagena” also mention that parents take turn in organizing “coladas” (drinks and biscuits) for their children. According to the teachers, this is voluntary. The parents, the headmaster and the teachers also explain that there are events in the school every month, such as the Christmas Party and the “Day of the Children”. The parents help out in organizing these events, for instance by making pamphlets or banners.

“Montevideo”

The headmaster in “Montevideo” explains that the majority of the parents participate in “mingas” which are held twice every third month. In these “mingas” the parents do “everything”, according to the headmaster, they paint, fix things in the classrooms and clean the school. Two of the teachers explain that although the school has a hired cleaner, the parents collaborate in cleaning the classrooms. One of the teachers clearly emphasizes the value of parents’ helping out with manual labour since the school lacks sufficient government support. However, another teacher explains that only 10-15 parents in each class participate in the “mingas”. She says that more collaboration from the parents is needed and that if the parents were more united, the school would be in a better condition. Yet another teacher explains that “mingas” are frequent, normally every month, depending on the needs of the school. This is voluntary according to the teacher, but the majority of the parents participate and they like to do it. Yet, she explains the “mingas” are done in an “obligatory form”,

otherwise the parents will not show up. This means that the school makes note of who is not attending, and they would ask them for an explanation for why they did not attend.

The three parents who were interviewed in “Montevideo” also explain that “mingas” are organized in the school. Two of them say however, that few parents participate in this. The third says that although the “mingas” are voluntary, the majority of the parents would collaborate in these and that the parents clean the classrooms of their children. The teachers and the parents in “Montevideo” also inform that the parents get involved in various events in the school, for instance the “Olympics”. Moreover, one teacher explains that the parents in her class will collect and sell used bottles, and the money from the sale of these bottles will be used for “any necessity” in the classroom.

The headmaster in “Montevideo” also explains that the parents get involved in “workshops” or meetings where they can come and learn about the educational achievement of their children. Further, the school sometimes arranges an event called “Open House”, where the students exhibit what they have learnt in school. One aim of the “Open House” is that also the parents shall learn something. For instance, in one of these events, the parents learnt how to make soaps and shampoo. According to the headmaster, it is beneficial for the parents to acquire such knowledge. If some of them lose their job, they could use the knowledge they gain in the “Open House” to produce and sell various things and thus gain a new source of income.

Comparison

These findings show that while parents participate in and organize various types of events in both the private and public schools, there is a clear difference in the extent to which they get involved in various types of manual labour. In both of the private schools, the fact that the school is private is used as an explanation for why the parents do not get involved in manual labour. Parents use the payment of fees as an argument for not participating. Thus, the payment of fees seems to influence and negatively affect the extent of manual labour done by the parents in the private schools in this study. In all the public schools parents help out in various types of manual labour. Although there are varying degrees of participation in these schools and also varying answers from the respondents, there is clearly more parents’ involvement in manual labour in the public schools than in the private schools, where this type of parents’ involvement seems to be very limited.

7.3 Presence at the school

*“If I do not come here, who would look after my children?”
(Mother “Cartagena”, public school).*

“As a parent, I am paying the teachers to protect and look after my children. I do not like them to be beaten (Father “Havana”, private school).

“I spend more time in the school than in my house. My husband says that I need a bed here” (Mother “Montevideo”, public school).

This section will provide details on whether the parents generally spend time at the school, for instance in order to talk to the teachers about their child’s homework and performance, or to look after their children.

The private schools

“Rosario”

In “Rosario”, spending time in the school on a daily basis and asking the teachers about their children’s homework and performance is not something that is mentioned among the parents. But the teacher and the headmaster explain that some parents will be present at school and ask the teachers about their children. Still, according to the teacher only a very few of them really care about whether their child do the homework or not.

“Havana”

In “Havana”, the teacher interviewed complains that the parents never come and ask about the homework of their children. She says that they only show up when the grades of their children are given and then they complain to the teachers and ask why their child got that particular grade. The headmaster explains that the parents generally do not get “too much involved” in the school and since “Havana” is a private school the parents expect the teachers be babysitters and take care of their children. Parents in the public schools do not have these same expectations, according to the headmaster. Also one father in “Havana” says that he expects that the teachers have control with his children since he is paying tuition fees to the school. Despite this, the headmaster says that the parents do care about the education of their children. Three of the mothers who were interviewed in “Havana” explain that they turn up at

the school and ask the teachers about their children's performance and behaviour in the school.

The public schools

"San Antonio"

"How shall we know how our children are doing, if we do not come here? We always ask how our children are doing" (Mother, "San Antonio").

The headmaster in "San Antonio" explains that every day "many parents" come to the school to talk to him about their children. He further explains that the school organizes "Atención a los padres de familia" ("visiting hours for parents"), which means that from 11.20 am. – 12.20 pm. the parents can come to school and talk to the teachers. Each teacher has scheduled one day each week for the parents of his or her class. The parents can also come and talk to the teacher during the classes, or at the end of the day. According to the headmaster, around half of the parents turn up at school for the visiting hours or during the classes and these are the most "most preoccupied ones". Those parents who have to work will try to come at the end of the day instead. One of the teachers in "San Antonio" explains that the parents will come in the visiting hours to talk about various issues such as the grades and behavior of their children or problems in the home. They will ask how their children are doing and if they do their homework. They will let the teacher know if their children do not understand the subjects, so that the teachers can help them.

According to three of the mothers in "San Antonio", few parents show up regularly at the school:

"You can see that few parents are here, those you see are the ones that collaborate" (Mothers, "San Antonio").

However, two other mothers say that they come to the school every day and talk to the teachers about various issues. When asked about why they get involved in the school, one of them emphasizes that it is important to turn up at school in order to get to know how the children are doing. Further, these mothers say that it is important to be present at the school so that the teachers see that they care and are responsible. Still they say that most of the parents only turn up at school when the grades of their children are given. These mothers also explain that the area around the school is dangerous, so they have to come and make sure that their

children are safe. It is unclear exactly what this implies. It is not likely that the mothers are present at the school the whole day. Rather, they bring and pick up their children at school and maybe they also turn up at school in the breaks.

“Cartagena”

The headmaster and one of the teachers in “Cartagena” explains that the parents are “good collaborators” and that they often come to school and ask the teachers if their child is responsible and accomplish with the tasks. But there is only one mother in “Cartagena” who mentions that she talks with the teachers about her children’s homework and how she can help her children, when she is present at the school. Still, another mother who formerly had her children in the nearby private school “Havana” says that she believes that the parents are more present in public schools than in private schools. She thinks this is because there are more students in each class in the public schools and the teachers therefore have less control with them. Parents in public schools therefore have to be more present in the school and spend more time looking after their children, compared to parents in private schools. Further, the mother says that she would like “Cartagena” and the public schools in general to be more secure. The teachers in these schools would not notice if the children left the school and she says that there is need for someone who could look after the children:

“In the private school, they would call me if my children were absent. But in the public schools, no one calls” (Mother, “Cartagena”).

“Montevideo”

The three parents who were interviewed in “Montevideo” explain that they themselves usually spend much time in the schools. Their answers vary however regarding whether the rest of the parents spend time at the school. Two of the teachers in “Montevideo” explain that they feel that the parents generally do not get much involved in the school. But those parents who *do* get involved, come to the school and ask the teachers how their children are doing.

“Those parents who get involved, ask a lot. If there is a task [for the children], they will ask: “Teacher, how should this task be done? Did my child present the homework? What do I have to bring?” (Teacher, “Montevideo”).

Also the third teacher who was interviewed in “Montevideo” explains that in her class she gives the parents the opportunity to come to the classroom and talk to her. In that way the

parents can get to know how their children are doing, be better able to help them and educate them and also learn about values. But the teacher says that she would have needed the parents to be more present in the school and take care of their children, because the small children can easily leave the school and this is very dangerous. As a teacher she does not have the opportunity to have the sufficient control with all the children in her class. One of the other teachers in “Montevideo” explains that there is generally more security and control in private schools because these schools have fewer students. She seems to imply that there is more need in the public schools for the parents to be present and take care of their children. The headmaster in “Montevideo” is however more positive regarding the general level of parents’ involvement in the school and says that about 70 per cent of the parents are “interested in their children”.

Comparison

These findings show that in both the private and the public schools there are varying answers from the headmasters, teachers and parents as for how much the parents are present at the school. Still, there is evidence that the parents are present to a greater or lesser extent in all the schools and that they use the opportunity to talk to the teachers about their children’s educational performance. Moreover, both in the private school “Havana” and in the public school “Cartagena” parents appear to have expectations about the role and responsibility of the teachers. They want that the teachers and the school shall take care of their children to a greater extent. Particularly in the private school “Havana” this appears to influence the extent to which parents are present and spend time in the school.

There seems however to be a slight tendency of more presence by parents in the public schools. For instance, the public school “San Antonio” is the only place where it is mentioned that the school has specified visiting hours where the parents can come and talk the teachers about their children. Further, since parents in the public schools participate in manual labour in the school whereas the parents in the private schools almost never do this, it might be that the parents in the public schools generally are more present at the school. Also, in all the public schools, it is emphasized that the area surrounding the school is not safe and some presence by the parents is therefore needed.

7.4 Parent meetings

The respondents were asked about the frequency of parent meetings in the school, how many parents usually attend these and what kind of topics which are discussed in the meetings. This information will be presented in the current section.

The private schools

“Rosario”

The headmaster in “Rosario” explains that parent meetings are held when the grades of the children are given, every third month. According to the headmaster only half of the parents turn up at the meetings and this is supported by one of the teachers. The last teacher however says that it varies and that sometimes many parents turn up, sometimes not. The answers from the parents vary as for how many generally turn up at the meetings. The respondents inform that in the parent meetings they discuss the grades and the educational performance of the students. They talk about the children’s homework and their behaviour. In addition they can discuss how the teachers do their job, various events or activities that will be held in the school and also matters related to the improvement of the school building. One of the teachers explains that in the meetings she tries to communicate to the parents that they have to help her and make their children present their homework in a good way. The headmaster also says that in cases when the teachers see that students do not do their homework and do not do an effort in class they will summon their parents to an individual meeting.

“Havana”

The headmaster in “Havana” explains that there are parent meetings for each of the grades every third month and she explains that around eighty per cent of the parents attend these meetings. The teacher interviewed however, says that only around 20 per cent of the parents show up in the parents’ meetings. Also the parents in “Havana” inform that generally very few parents turn up at the parent meetings. Two of them however, say that in the meetings where the grades of the children are given, all parents will turn up, but when there are other types of parent meetings very few parents attend (it is not clear what kind of meeting this is). Some of the parents mention that it is a problem that many parents do not turn up at the meetings because majority agreement is needed in order to get something done. Therefore it is

sometimes hard to reach an agreement. Some mothers say that the parents who do not turn up at the meetings, just have to agree with the decisions, but still there is a risk of later disagreements with these parents.

When asked about what kind of topics are discussed in the parent meetings, the respondents mention the behaviour, the grades, the educational performance and the participation of the children. They discuss pedagogical matters, how the teacher does his/her job and how the parents can help their children with the school work. They also discuss the planning of the various events and activities in the school. In addition, there is a general meeting once a year where all the parents in “Havana” are supposed to meet together. In this meeting the school informs them about the rules. According to the headmaster, about 90 per cent of the parents turn up to this meeting. She further explains that they know that there are many families with a lot of violence. This is reflected in aggressive children in the school and also some of the parents are quite aggressive towards the teachers. Therefore the school will soon try to organize a workshop where the parents will be taught moral values which they can put in practice at home. However, they will have to arrange this workshop together with the meetings when they inform the parents about the grades of the children. Otherwise the parents will not turn up, according to the headmaster.

The public schools

“San Antonio”

The headmaster explains that there are meetings for all the parents in “San Antonio” every third month. In these meetings, a little more than half of the parents turn up. The two teachers interviewed confirm this and say that not many parents turn up at the meetings. The answers from the parents vary as for how many attend the meetings. About the half of them says that the majority attends and the other half says that only a very small percentage of the parents attend the meetings. The respondents explain that in the meetings they discuss the behaviour, grades and educational performance of the children. Also they discuss the fact that some parents do not give enough help to their children with their homework. They talk about rules, how the school works and how the teachers do their job. The parents have the opportunity to say what they like and do not like about the school and they discuss the school’s needs. Some of the parents have for instance complained that the bathrooms are dirty. In the meetings they

also discuss upcoming events and activities in the school and the parents can take initiative to organize these.

In addition, “Escuela de los padres” (“School for parents”), is arranged in “San Antonio” every third month. This was an initiative from the headmaster and the teachers and also a priority for them. One of the teachers also explains that this is part of the curriculum as an obligation from the Ministry of Education. In the “School for parents”, the parents get advice on how they should raise their children. Many parents have been mistreated themselves when they were younger, and the school does not want them to transmit this to their own children.

“Cartagena”

The headmaster in “Cartagena” explains that there are general meetings for all the parents in the school. These are usually held every second month, depending on the situation. If there are issues which cannot be solved in the central parents’ committee, these cases will be passed on to this general parent meeting in order to reach a consensus. The headmaster also explains that in the general parent meetings, cases which are particularly important for the school are discussed. Sometimes the meetings will be held separately for the parents in each grade. The headmaster and the teachers explain that around 80 to 100 per cent of the parents attend these meetings. Also the parents in “Cartagena” relate that the majority attend the parent meetings.

The respondents explain that in the meetings they talk about the educational performance, the grades and behaviour of the children. They discuss how the children are taught and how the teachers do their job. One teacher explains that the parents have the opportunity to mention cases where they feel that the teachers are not doing their job well. They can explain what they think is wrong so that the school can improve. In addition, questions related to the cleaning and the maintenance of the school and planning of events and activities are discussed. Also, if there is some important information from the Ministry of Education, this is discussed in the meetings. The parents also relate that in the meetings the teachers tell the parents to help their children more with their homework. One of the teachers also explains that the area where “Cartagena” is located is characterized by a high degree of violence inside the families. Therefore the school organizes a workshop for the parents once every third month so that they can learn how violence affects the children’s performance in school.

“Montevideo”

The headmaster in “Montevideo” explains that there are meeting for the parents of each grade every third month and he says that around 60 per cent of the parents attend these meetings.

The teachers disagree concerning how many parents attend parent meetings. One of them says that in her grade the majority of the parents come, another says seventy percent of the parents come and yet another says that in the last meeting she organized only ten parents, out of thirty students, came to the meeting. The three parents who were interviewed in “Montevideo” explain that generally few parents turn up in the meetings.

The respondents explain that in the meetings they talk about grades and the educational performance of the children. They also talk about pedagogical matters and how the parents can help their children with school work. One mother informs that the teachers emphasize in the parents meetings that the children have to study. Also, the parents are taught values and how they should treat their children at home. They further talk about the necessities of the school, for instance if something has to be repaired, and about the future events and activities.

Comparison

These findings show that all the schools, both the private and the public, have regular meetings for the parents every second or third month. There are varying answers from parents, teachers and headmasters in all the schools as for how many parents attend the parent meetings. The exception is the public school “Cartagena” where all the respondents seem to agree that the majority of the parents attend the parent meetings. The topics which are discussed in the meetings are quite similar in all the schools and relate to the behaviour and educational performance of the children, pedagogical matters and how the teachers do their job, the planning of events and activities and the improvement of the infrastructure of the school. In addition, all the schools, except for the private school “Rosario”, have meetings where the aim is to teach values to the parents. Thus, no clear differences are observed between the public and private schools regarding attendance at parent meetings or types of topics which are discussed.

7.5 Parents' committees

“The parents do not want to commit themselves, they do not want responsibility, they think that if they are elected into the committee they have to pay” (Headmaster “Rosario”, private school).

As mentioned in chapter two, parents in both private and public schools in Ecuador have the right to be elected into parents' committees. Parents in the public schools however, have the right to be elected into a “Gobierno Escolar” (“School Government”). This is a committee consisting of representatives of the parents, students, teachers and administration of the school, as described in chapter two (MEE 2012a). In this section, details on the existence and functioning of parents' committees in each of the schools will be provided.

The private schools

“Rosario”

The headmaster in “Rosario” first explains that there is no parents' committee in the school. She relates this to the fact that the parents do not want to commit themselves and that they point to the previously mentioned “Regulations of cost in private education”, where it is stated that the school cannot ask the parents for any additional financial contributions other than the matriculation and tuition fees. The headmaster says that the parents associate the involvement in a committee with financial contributions or the accumulation of money from the other parents, in order to pay for various necessities of the school.

“No, precisely a parents' committee....we do not have that here, because when there is any necessity, it is the institution [the school] which has to cover all of it. I repeat the parents pay monthly tuition and nothing more ... therefore they say that the law forbids that we ask for additional money, therefore we do not have anything of this” (Headmaster “Rosario”).

At a later point however, the headmaster explains that parents' committees for each of the grades have in fact been elected in the school. But she says that these committees do not function and they do not do anything. The most important reason for this is that parents do not have time because they have to work. One of the teachers however, explains that the parents' committees meet when there are special events, for instance the “Olympics” or the “Day of the Children”. But these are the only times when the committees meet, there are no regular meetings. One mother in “Rosario” explains that there are parents' committees in the school,

but that she is not involved in any of them. She does not like it because the committee has to raise money for the various events in the school. Three of the other parents explain that there are no parents' committees in the school. Finally there is one mother who explains that she is the treasurer in the committee, but she mentioned this only when she was asked. It seemed like she had forgotten about it. She explains however that the parents' committee meets to plan the Christmas party.

“Havana”

The headmaster in “Havana” explains that there is both a central parents' committee and parents' committees for each of the grades in the school. There are six members in the committee for each grade and these are elected by the other parents. The headmaster says that these members would usually be the parents who are most responsible, serious and committed to their work. The central committee consists of six members and these are the presidents from the committees for each of the grades.

The headmaster explains that the central parents' committee collaborates with her and the teachers in the school. Further, the parents' committees organize events in the school, for instance dance shows. Also, the headmaster informs that in the committee, they discuss “education”. She says that the parents want to evaluate how the teacher is doing his or her job in the class, as well as his or her methodology and enthusiasm for working with the children. The central committee meets twice a month. In addition, once a year the central committee meets with the headmaster and the teacher to look at the plans for the following year. This information is further given to the parents' committees for each grade. The headmaster explains that the central committee is in charge of the “needs of the institution”. When the school has specific necessities, for instance if new chairs are needed or the walls need to be painted, the central committee will try to take care of this by organizing fundraising events. For instance, last year the committee arranged a dance-show. With the money from this show, they paid for the construction of concrete walls in the school where there had formerly been bamboo walls. The committees, and in particular the presidents, can decide how the money that they have collected should be spent. This is according to the headmaster, because the parents are “a part of the school”:

Interviewer: "So the president of the parents' committee can take part in decisions regarding what the money shall be used for?"

Headmaster: "Of course yes, because the parents are a part of the school. Thanks to the parents we work, we are able to receive a salary".

However, the teacher in "Havana" explains that the parents' committee almost never meets. This occurs only when there are special problems in the institution. For instance, she explains that some children are "rebels". The parents' committee would then meet and discuss how they shall work with these children and whether they should be sent somewhere else. Most of the parents in "Havana" explain that there are parents' committees in the school and that these committees examine the needs of the school and try to find ways to solve these. One mother explains that the committee does some manual labour in the school. Further, some parents explain that the parents' committee organizes different events, such as Christmas parties or the "Day of the Children". The committee will collect money for these events, for instance by organizing "bingos". Once a year, all the parents in "Havana" have to sell bingo cards. The money from these sales is also used for various necessities in the school. For instance, last year a new sink was bought. Despite this, two of the mothers interviewed in "Havana" say that they are not sure whether there exists a parents' committee in the school at all.

The public schools

"San Antonio"

The headmaster in "San Antonio" explains that there is a central parents' committee and also a committee for each of the grades in the school. The committees are elected "democratically" according to the headmaster, which means that it is the parents who elect the members. According to all the respondents, the parents' committees collaborate with and help the school. For any improvement the school needs, these committees will try to find a way to solve it. For instance when the bathrooms have to be fixed, if there are needs for new chairs or more medicines, the committees will take care of this.

One of the teachers explains that the central parents' committee will write a letter to the headmaster requesting money for various necessities in the school. The headmaster will approve the letter and send it further to various institutions and enterprises, such as the local municipality of Guayaquil or the Red Cross, in order to ask for financial support. The teacher

explains that the letters are always revised by a teacher or a parent who has more education, because not all the parents in the school have the skill to write such letters. Moreover, she says that it is important that the parents' committee is behind this initiative. Then the institutions and enterprises will see that it is the community (the parents in the school) that is requesting support, not only the headmaster and teachers. This is particularly relevant when requesting the local municipality in time of elections. If the politicians in the local municipality respond positively on a request from the parents it might increase the possibility that these parents will vote for them later.

The headmaster also explains that the parents committee can go to the media if something particular happens and if they are not satisfied with something. But he explains that this has not happened yet in "San Antonio". Further, the parents in "San Antonio" explain that the parents' committees discuss and organize the events and activities in the school and also organize various types of manual labour ("mingas"). In addition, the headmaster explains that the state allocates funds to the school and that the parents' committees monitor these funds. This is also mentioned by the parents and some of them say that it is only the parents' committees that receive information about the budget, not the rest of the parents in the school. However, the headmaster says that also the parents in general can influence decisions related to how the school shall spend its money.

"Cartagena"

The headmaster in "Cartagena" mentions involvement in the "Gobierno Escolar" ("School Government") as the first thing when she is asked how parents generally get involved in the school. She explains that the parents' representatives in the "Gobierno Escolar" are elected in a general meeting for all the parents. This is confirmed by the parents who were interviewed. The headmaster further explains that this association meets once a week to discuss the school's educational and administrative plans. She and the teachers inform the "Gobierno Escolar" about the school's budget and the association further decides and ratifies what is most important to spend money on. Information is also given to all the parents about how the school has spent the money.

One of the parents explains that the president of the "Gobierno Escolar" follows the headmaster to meetings with staff in the Ministry of Education. Also, one of the parent representatives in the association helps the headmaster with bureaucratic matters and

paperwork. In addition, as mentioned previously, when the school was not able to pay the cleaner, the parents' delegates in the "Gobierno Escolar" initiated the sale of small purses to be used together with the school uniforms. The cleaner was paid from the sale of these purses. Further, if there are some particular problematic situations in the school, some external delegates will join in the "Gobierno Escolar" and talk with the headmaster and try to solve the situation. It is unclear where these external delegates come from.

In addition, there are parents' committees for each of the grades in the school. The headmaster explains that these committees spend much time discussing how the children are taught and matters related to the cleaning of the school. Also, the parents explain that the committees help out with cleaning, renovation and improving the school.

"Montevideo"

According to the headmaster in "Montevideo", there exists a parents' committee in the school. However, he explains that this committee does not function now, but it did before. The headmaster explains that he calls the members of the committee, but they do not turn up and they are not motivated to participate. He explains that the parents' committee does not have much money available for use and that this is one of the reasons why parents do not want to get involved in it. Also, the headmaster says that he solves problems directly with the parents and therefore he thinks that there is not much need for a parents' committee in the school. The committee only gathers when there is an emergency. At a later point however, the headmaster explains that the central parents' committee in "Montevideo" discusses the budget of the school and can influence how the money should be spent. This is discussed only in the committee, not in the general meetings for all the parents. Also two of the mothers in "Montevideo" confirm this. Still, all in all the headmaster seems to believe that the central parents' committee does not really have much influence in general.

However, the teachers and the parents in "Montevideo" explain that there are also parents' committees for each of the grades in the school. These are elected by the parents. The central parents' committee is elected from the committees for each of the grades. The committees take care of the necessities of the school, for instance if something is broken or if there is a problem with the water. Also, the respondents inform that the parents' committees organize events in the school where they sell different kinds of food. The money from this sale is used for various needs in the classrooms or the purchase of toys for the children.

Comparison

These findings show that parents' committees exist in all the schools, although they appear to function to varying degrees. Particularly in the private school "Rosario" and the public school "Montevideo" the committees seem to have a limited role. Also, respondents in one and the same school often provide different answers regarding how well the parent committees function. Still, there is no clear difference between the private and the public schools in this study when it comes to the extent to which they have well-functioning parents' committees. In the private school "Havana" and in all the public schools, the parents' committees play an important role when it comes to helping the school with various needs, especially related to the improvement of the infrastructure. This is interesting from a development perspective because it shows the importance and benefits of parents' involvement in schools in a marginalized context.

Moreover, there is no clear observed difference between the private and the public schools regarding the topics that the parents' committees work with. The exception is that the parents' committees in all the public schools have the opportunity to influence budget-decisions. In the private school "Rosario", the parents in general do not seem to have this opportunity at all. In the private school "Havana" not much information was obtained regarding the extent to which the parents' committees or the parents in general are able to take part in budget-decisions. Still, at least some members of the parents' committee can decide how the money that the committee has accumulated shall be spent. Further, although it is an obligation to create a "Gobierno Escolar" ("School Government") in every public school in Ecuador, it is only in the public school "Cartagena" that this term is used. Also, it is only in "Cartagena" that the students are included in the parents' committee, as is one requirement of the "Gobierno Escolar".

7.6 Decision-making

The parents, teachers and headmasters in the schools were asked directly whether they feel that the parents can take part in decisions in the school. However, as described in the methodology chapter, there are some limitations to the ecological validity of these findings. Although most parents say that they have the opportunity to make decisions in the school, it might be that they would have been afraid of relating the contrary. One can also discuss whether the answers from the headmasters and teachers are entirely valid, for instance due to

a possible wish to present the school in a good way. In addition, the answers from the parents in all the schools regarding this issue turned out to vary to a great extent within one and the same school. The exception is the public school “Cartagena”, where the majority of the parents say that they generally are able to take part in decisions in the school. Still, on the basis of the answers from the respondents, it is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding the parents’ opportunity to take part in decisions in the schools. It is also difficult to make an overview on opportunities for decision-making in each of the schools. Sub-headings for each of the schools are therefore not included in this section.

As shown in the previous sections on parent meetings and parents’ committees, there are no clear observed differences between the private and the public schools regarding what kind of issues the parents discuss and work with. Thus, there does not appear to be any clear difference between the two types of schools regarding what type of decisions the parents are able to influence. The exception is an indication of greater opportunity for parents in the public schools to take part in budget-decisions, as described in the previous section. In addition, as explained in chapter six, the headmasters in all the public schools explain that the school’s budget is published on the internet. The headmaster in the private school “Rosario” however, explains that since it is a private school, they are not obliged to publish the school’s budget to the parents or on the internet. She says that parents can ask her for information about the budget if they want to, but she is not obliged to give this to them. For the private school “Havana” information on this issue was not obtained. Whether or not the schools publish their budget is interesting regarding parents opportunity to influence budget-decisions. If the budget is published, parents may be better able to make opinions related to it.

7.7 Criticism, suggestions and opinions from parents

This study has also been concerned with the extent to which parents raise criticism towards the school or come with suggestions and opinions, as well as what kind of criticism, suggestions and opinions they give. In order to obtain information on this issue, the parents were asked questions such as “Do you or the other parents sometimes raise criticism towards the school?” and “Have there been times when you have been unsatisfied with the school?” The headmasters and teachers were also asked similar questions related to criticism, opinions and suggestions from the parents. It should be mentioned that the respondents might have had

different understandings of the term “criticism” in this context. Some of them might understand this term as including strong emotions and loud protests towards the school, whereas others might understand criticism as raising their own opinions in a polite way. Still, questions such as “Do you or the other parents sometimes give your own opinions in the meetings or at other occasions?” and “Do you or the other parents sometimes come with suggestions for change?” were also asked. Thus, various understandings of the term “criticism” have been sought achieved.

However, this issue turned out to be difficult to investigate. In all the schools, both the private and the public, when the parents were asked directly, most of them answered that they are generally satisfied with the school and that they feel that the headmaster and teacher listen to their wishes and needs. Still, many parents both in the private and the public schools might have feared negative consequences of expressing critical opinions in the interviews. Their positive answers therefore have to be interpreted with this in mind.

Two examples serve to underline this point: First, most of the parents in the private school “Havana” express positive attitudes toward the school. There is however one father who is more negative. He says that the teachers are sometimes impolite and do not always listen to him. However, in order to avoid any problems the father says that it is best “not to speak” because he is afraid that the teachers might pick on his son and give him bad grades.

Second, a couple who is interviewed together in the public school “Cartagena” suddenly exclaims in the course of the interview that “we have to be careful with the information we give, because a lot of things are happening”. This interview is conducted close to the school gate and the couple do not say more about what they meant by this. However, my local interpreter told me afterwards that they probably thought that we were from the government and feared that what they said would end up there.

Similarly, it might be that neither the answers from the headmasters nor the teachers are entirely honest, as they could fear negative consequences of expressing critical attitudes and of informing about criticism from the parents. They might also have been concerned about the reputation of the school. In all the schools, both the private and the public, the headmasters say that although many parents give opinions and although many parents come with criticism, the school still has a good relationship with the majority of the parents.

Still, when the respondents are asked about various *types* of criticism, opinions or suggestions from the parents, they mostly provide quite detailed answers. However, no particular differences were observed between the private and the public schools on this issue. Sub-headings for each of the schools are therefore not included in this section. In all the schools, the respondents inform that parents complain about issues such as the teacher not doing a good job, that the teacher has preference for one child rather than their child or that the teacher does not give sufficient attention to the parents.

In the private school “Havana” some parents argue that since they pay tuition fees, the facilities of the school should be better. They say that the school has not improved or changed, even though the parents pay fees and have collected additional funds. Parents in all the public schools inform that they or the other parents sometimes get upset when they are asked for financial contributions. For instance, one mother in “San Antonio” mentions an episode when the parents were asked to pay for some of the children’s books. Many parents protested on this because they had been told that all the necessary books should be given by the state. One mother in the public school “Cartagena” explains that she has been frustrated when the school has asked the parents to contribute with money to buy water or ink for the copy machine. Moreover, criticism of the facilities and lack of space in the school is something that is mentioned in all the public schools and also in the private school “Havana”.

8 Discussion

8.1 How do parents get involved in the two different types of schools, private and public?

In this sub-chapter the “mayor categories” of parents’ involvement, which were described in the previous chapter, will be discussed (financial contributions, manual labour and events, presence at school, parent meetings, parents’ committees, decision-making and criticism from parents). The analysis will be based on the possible differences between the private and the public schools. Moreover, parents’ involvement will be analyzed in the light of Social Capital Theory with a discussion of how the relationships and networks which are brought about as a result of parents’ involvement can provide advantages or benefits for the students, the parents and the school itself, including the teachers and the headmasters. Also, internal and external factors of civil society which may facilitate or prevent parents’ involvement will be discussed.

8.1.1 Financial contributions

Since the private schools included in this study do not receive financial support from the government or any foundation, except for some material provided by the local municipality, these schools depend on what the parents pay in annual matriculation fees and monthly tuition fees. In addition, respondents in both of the private schools inform that the schools have need for extra financial contributions from the parents in addition to these fees, in order to cover various necessities. Similarly, respondents inform that the financial support given from the government to the public schools is inadequate. The public schools are therefore also in need of some financial contributions from the parents. Thus, in both the private and the public schools included in this study, the parents contribute with money. As was elaborated in the introduction chapter and the literature review, parents can play a vital role in schools in marginalized contexts, for instance by giving financial help. This seems to be the case in all the schools in this study.

However, there are indications that financial contributions in general are significant burdens for the parents. This applies both to the annual matriculation fees and monthly tuition fees which are paid in the private schools and additional financial contributions which are given by parents in both the private and the public schools. Thus, in both types of schools there is a gap

between the needs of the school and the parents' ability to help out financially. This might influence the relationship between parents and the school and lead to possible tensions. On the other hand, since all the schools benefit from and to a large extent are dependent on financial contributions from the parents, it is likely that the teachers and headmasters will try to aim for a good relationship with them. A good relationship with the school will probably increase the willingness of the parents to help the school financially. The parents can be a resource for the school. A strong network with the parents is therefore social capital for the school which will be valuable since it might facilitate extra financial contributions from the parents. Thus, the needs of the school might actually contribute to the formation of networks and relationships between the parents and the school.

As mentioned in chapter four, Coleman (1988) explains that there are various differences in social structures which have implications for the extent of social capital within that structure. There are for instance differences in the actual needs that persons have for help and in the existence of other sources of aid, such as government welfare services. As mentioned, the private schools in this study are entirely dependent upon what they receive in financial contributions from the parents, in the form of fees and additional contributions. The public schools however, receive money from government. Therefore, although the financial support from the government to the public schools does not appear to be sufficient and although parents in the public schools also contribute with money to the schools, it might still be argued that the private schools are more dependent on the financial contributions from parents than the public schools are. In total, the parents do most likely contribute financially to a greater extent in the private schools than in the public schools. This is not only because the parents in the private schools pay fees, but also because they seem to contribute more with additional financial contributions, for instance in relation to fundraising events and purchase of various school material.

Thus, one could presume that the private schools would be even more interested than the public schools in maintaining a good relationship with the parents and that the networks between the parents and the teachers/headmasters would be stronger in the private schools. That is, the headmasters and teachers in the private schools would be in need of more social capital than the headmasters and teachers in the public schools. However, the findings of this study show no clear differences between the private and public schools regarding the relationship between the headmasters/teachers and the parents, in terms of the way they talked

about each other. It could of course be that the respondents were afraid of providing negative opinions. This is however the case both in the private and the public schools. Thus, there is no clear evidence that the relationship between the parents and the school is better in the private than the public schools included in this study.

Also the parents benefit from contributing financially to the school. Better facilities and infrastructure will be an advantage for their children and providing the school with money is therefore also in the parents' own interest. In the public school "Cartagena", it is mentioned that sometimes parents go together in a group, on their own initiative, and buy something for the school, e.g. plants. A group of parents will be able to contribute with more money to the school than one parent alone. The parents therefore benefit from cooperating together. That is, they form networks and gain social capital which will be of advantage for their children in terms of improved infrastructure. This is an example where social capital is also a public good and has external effects. That is, it is not only the children of the parents in the group who benefit from their involvement. Rather, when their involvement leads to improved infrastructure, this will be of benefit for all the children in the school.

8.1.2 Manual labour and events

This section will mostly be concerned with the extent of manual labour done by the parents in the schools, as the findings of this study show some interesting differences between the private and public schools on this issue. As described in the previous chapter, parents in the public schools do participate in manual labour to a great extent, whereas most of the parents in the private schools do not seem to do this at all. It may be argued that much of the reason for this difference lies in the fact that the parents in the private schools pay for the cleaning and renovations of the school, whereas the parents in the public schools rather contribute in kind with their own workforce. The hours that the parents in the public schools spend doing various types of work in the school, might equal the value of the payment from the parents in the private schools. On the other hand, it could be argued that the public schools should receive sufficient financial support from the government in order to purchase cleaning and renovation services for the school, so that the parents would not have to do this.

It is however clear that the public schools are dependent on the parents to do manual labour in the school, due to lack of sufficient financial support from the government. Thus, this might lead the school to aim for a good relationship with the parents, which may increase their

willingness to help out in the school. This might further explain the lack of difference between the private and the public schools in this study, in terms of relationship between the parents and the school, as outlined in the previous section. The private schools receive more financial contributions from the parents and are also more dependent on these. Similarly, parents in the public schools contribute with more manual labour, which the public schools are dependent upon. Taken together, *both* the private and the public schools in this study are dependent upon the parents and will therefore most likely aim for a good relationship with them.

However, it appears that also the private schools in this study would have needed the parents to help out with manual labour. In the private school “Havana” it is clearly emphasized, especially by the headmaster but also some of the parents, that the school needs the parents to help out more. The amount of matriculation and tuition fees which is charged in the school does not seem to be enough to purchase sufficient cleaning and renovation. This can be related to the fact that the school offers reduced fees and do probably not receive enough additional financial contributions from the parents. This is also the case in the private school “Rosario”. The argument from the parents of not contributing in manual labour would have been more valid if the fees were actually sufficient to cover all the needs of the school. The private schools offer reduced fees to the parents so that they are able to pay. At the same time, the parents use the payment of fees as an argument for not helping out in the school. This seems to be a dilemma and problem for both of the private schools included in this study.

That said, no apparent differences were noticed between the private and the public schools in terms of facilities. It is clear that *all* the schools included in this study are in need of improvement. The private schools did not seem to be in worse conditions than the public schools in the same area, although the parents do not collaborate with manual labour in these schools. There is therefore no evidence that reduced involvement from the parents in terms of manual labour necessarily leads to worse facilities in the private schools. Thus, the financial contributions from the parents in the private schools do to some extent make up for their lack of manual labour in the school.

One could however presume that the payment of matriculation and tuition fees would be of *more* benefit to the private schools in terms of maintenance, compared to the public schools. As described in the literature review, Latham (cited in Patrinos et al 2009) argues that people are interested in maintaining what they have invested in. When parents invest financially in

the private schools, one might therefore think that they would be interested in contributing to the maintenance of the school, more than parents in the public schools. This is however not the case in the private schools in this study. Paying fees does not lead the parents in these schools to do more manual labour. Rather, the findings show that payment makes the parents less willing to help out. Thus, payment has the opposite effect and actually prevents participation in manual labour in the private schools. However, since they do not receive any support from the government or other institutions/foundations, the private schools *have* to charge matriculation and tuition fees from the parents.

Help from the parents in terms of manual labour in the schools have several positive outcomes for all parts, first and foremost for the students who benefit from a school which is in a better condition. But in addition parents can also gain positive outcomes for themselves. When parents do manual labour in the school they also spend time in the school. Then they gain an opportunity to build networks and relationships with the other parents and the teachers and headmasters. This is social capital which can be beneficial for them at a later point. As mentioned in the previous section, when parents cooperate together in groups, they are stronger than one parent alone. Thus, there may be negative consequences for the parents in the private schools of not participating in manual labour. They probably spend less time in the school than the parents in the public schools. Therefore, they miss an opportunity to build networks and relationships and valuable social capital.

Moreover, in many public schools also the teachers contribute with some kind of manual labour. This might benefit them as well and influence the relationship they have with the parents. One teacher in the public school “Montevideo” explains that generally, a teacher who has been in a public school for many years and helped out with construction and renovation, is usually very much adored by the parents. This could imply that the teachers in the public schools have greater opportunity to build relationships with the parents, compared to teachers in the private schools. Still, as mentioned in the previous section, there is no clear evidence of a difference between the private and public schools regarding the relationship between the parents and the teachers and headmasters. One can therefore only presume that since parents and the teachers in the public schools spend more time doing manual labour in the school, they have greater *possibility* to form relationships and obtain more social capital, than parents and teachers in the private schools.

Another important aspect regarding parents' involvement in manual labour, and also in various events in the school, is the indication that parents would risk negative consequences if not participating. There is evidence of threats from the schools that if the parents do not help out, the grades of their children will be lowered or the children might lose their right to attend the school. In the private school "Havana", there are threats of negative outcomes if the parents do not collaborate in the events. In the public schools "San Antonio" and "Cartagena", there are threats from the school that parents risk negative consequences if they do not participate in manual labour.

Some parents in "Havana" and "San Antonio" say that these are only threats and that the negative consequences never actually occur. This issue might still say something about the relationship between the parents and the school. It might be that the schools regard threats as the only way to make the parents turn up and participate in the school. In the public school "Montevideo" one teacher explains that they have to organize the manual labour in an "obligatory form", which means that the school will take notes of the parents who are not attending and ask them for an explanation. Otherwise they will not turn up according to the teacher. It might be that this is actually true and that threats are therefore necessary in order to make the parents help out in the school. Thus, there seems to be lack of trust and confidentiality on the part of the school towards the parents. As previously described, Coleman (1988) sees trust as one form of social capital and claims that a group within which there is extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trust. The signs of low level of trust between the school and the parents can therefore imply reduced social capital in the network and a reduced possibility for all parts to obtain various beneficial outcomes. If there was more trust in the network, it might be that the parents and the school would be able to cooperate in a better way and achieve much more. This applies both to the private and the public schools in this study.

8.1.3 Presence at the school

Although parents are present in both types of schools, parents in the public schools appear to turn up at school slightly more than parents in the private schools. There are various reasons why parents would be present at school. For instance, parents in the public schools do manual labour in the school and are therefore likely to spend much time there. Furthermore, there is some evidence that there is more need for parents' presence in the public schools. In all the

schools included in this study it is emphasized that the area surrounding the school is characterized by a high degree of crime. The children can escape from the school and there have been problems with kidnapping of children. Thus, there is need for the parents to be present and take care of their children. This does not necessarily imply that parents are present at school all day, but that they at least have to follow their children to and from school and that some of them might also be present in the breaks. Since the public schools have more students in each class, it is probably more difficult for the teachers to have complete control with the students, compared to teachers in the private schools. Several respondents explain that the parents in public schools therefore have to be more present and look after the children, than parents in the private schools. Thus the high number of students in the public schools is a factor which requires some presence from the parents in these schools. Moreover, in the private school “Havana” there is some evidence that since the parents are paying tuition fees, they expect the teachers to take care of their children. This might also explain their lack of presence in the school. Thus, the payment of fees may be a factor which negatively affects parents’ presence in the private schools.

Respondents in both the private and the public schools included in this study explain that the parents often talk to the teachers about the school work of their children and get advice and help. Thus, parents themselves, and indirectly also their children, benefit from turning up at school. When they talk to and discuss with the teacher, it is likely that they will be better able to help their children with homework. In a marginalized area where most of the parents do not have much education themselves, this can be of vital importance. As described in chapter two, the share of the population with no education is higher in the region of this study than in the rest of Guayaquil. Moreover, lack of, or low level of education, among the parents is mentioned by many respondents in both the private and public schools in this study.

Parents can to some extent make up for their lack of education by making use of the relations they have, such as the teachers in their child’s school, to obtain knowledge. That is, they can build social capital outside the family (with the teachers) which will be of benefit for themselves and their children. When the parents use the knowledge acquired to help their children, they also increase the amount of social capital *within* the family, as described in Coleman (1988). Parents’ lack of education is therefore a factor which may increase parents’ presence and involvement in the school. Furthermore, the studies conducted by Henderson & Berla (1994) document that when parents get involved in their children’s education in school,

the teachers they work with have higher opinions of them as parents and also higher expectations of their children. Thus, the children benefit from parents' presence and involvement in school.

That said, there is no evidence in the findings of this study that those parents who are not much present at school help their children less with school work at home. Still, being present and building relations and social capital at school is one *possible* way for parents of achieving various benefits, such as help from the teachers. Since parents in the public schools appear to be slightly more present at school than parents in the private schools, they may be facilitated in this respect. On the other hand, the pupil-teacher ratio is much lower in the private schools than the public school in this study. Thus, the teachers in the private schools are likely to have more time for each student and his/her parents. This may put the parents in the private schools in an advantaged position when it comes to the general opportunity to meet the teachers and receive help from them, compared to parents in the public schools.

8.1.4 Parent meetings

As shown in the previous chapter, no clear difference is observed between the public and private schools in this study when it comes to attendance at parent meetings or types of topics that are discussed. As previously elaborated, Wolff & de Moura Castro (2001) argue that charging parents for education will encourage them to demand better quality of the school. Similarly, the AFK-team (2007) argues that there is less incentive for parents to monitor teachers and for the teachers to be responsive in the public schools. This incentive would be greater in private schools where parents are paying the teachers' salaries. However, the findings in this study show that payment of matriculation and tuition fees in the private schools (which also cover teachers' salaries) does not necessarily lead to increased attendance at parent meetings or any difference in topics that are discussed in the meetings. That is, parents in the private schools do not appear to use the possible opportunity in parent meetings to make demands or monitor the school, to a greater extent than parents in the public schools.

At the same time, parents in the public schools contribute with manual labour and also with *some* voluntary financial contributions. Thus, these parents also have an incentive to demand quality of the school and attend parent meetings in order to make their voice heard. This may explain the lack of difference between the private and the public schools when it comes to attendance at parent meetings. Parents in both types of schools contribute to the school, either

financially or with manual labour, and do therefore have an incentive to demand quality of the school and expectations to gain some influence.

In all the schools, both the private and the public, the teachers and headmasters use the parent meetings to emphasize the importance of homework. The teachers either inform the parents about *how* they can help their children with homework or they emphasize that the parents should help their children more. The teachers and the headmaster in this study argue that educating the parents will in turn benefit the children. Moreover, it is interesting to note that all the schools, except for the private school “Rosario”, have meetings where the aim is to teach values to the parents. This is often related to the problem of violence in many of the families in the area where the schools are located. In “San Antonio” it is mentioned that it is a requirement from the Ministry of Education to organize this type of workshop. This implies not only that violence in the home is a significant problem in the area, but also that the school is assigned an important role in tackling this challenge. Furthermore, in the public school “Montevideo” events are held where one aim is to teach the parents skills which they can use as a source of income. For instance, parents have been taught how to make shampoo and soaps, with the intention that they can produce and sell such products and earn money from it.

These examples show the schools in this study play a role in and take some responsibility for educating the parents. They do not only educate them on educational matters related to their children’s work, but they also teach values, child-raising and various skills which might be a source of income for the parents. Thus, the schools in the geographic location of the study appear to play a social role in the community. They do not only focus on helping the students, but also on helping their parents. This again show the benefits and social capital which parents can gain by being present at and cooperating with the school. As explained in Shaeffer (1992), parents’ participation in school can also change the parents themselves. When parents attend meetings and workshops, they acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills that can change and benefit them and which they can further use for benefit of the local community.

8.1.5 Parents’ committees

As previously described, in all the schools in this study there are parents’ committees, although these function to varying degrees. In all the schools, the respondents explain that the members of the parents’ committees are elected democratically by the parents. This means that in theory all parents have the chance of joining the committee, not only those who are

more affluent or those who have more education. Further, since it is the parents who elect the members of the committee and not the teachers or headmasters, it is less likely that the parents' relationship with the teachers will influence their chance of becoming a member of the parents' committee. Thus, the parents' committees in all the schools have the potential of being a democratic channel for decision-making for the whole parent community.

The findings of this study show that there are no clear differences between the private and the public schools regarding the extent to which the parents get involved in committees. The committees function to varying degrees both in the private and the public schools. Thus, it is not necessarily the case that since they pay matriculation and tuition fees, parents in private schools get involved more in committees than parents in public schools, in order to make their voice heard. Still, as has been mentioned previously, since the parents in the public schools also contribute to the schools in form of manual labour and *some* voluntary financial contributions, they are also likely to expect to gain influence in the school and getting involved in a parent committee is one way to achieve this.

As was described in chapter two, parents in both private and public schools in Ecuador have the right to elect and be elected into a parents' committee. As explained in Silva-Leander (2007), a possible facilitating factor for civil society participation in Ecuador is the legal basis. A legal and regulatory framework for the right of citizens to associate is an external factor which creates an enabling environment for social accountability. Thus, by establishing the right of parents to associate in a parents' committee, the Ecuadorian government has contributed to facilitating parents' involvement and increased accountability in the schools. However, it appears that the public schools are regulated to a greater extent than the private schools when it comes to parents' involvement in committees, since it specified in a concrete manner how the "Gobierno Escolar" ("School Government") in the public schools shall function.

Further, in the public school "San Antonio" and in the private school "Havana" respondents inform that not all parents have the sufficient skills to fulfill the responsibilities that accompany a membership in a parents' committee. For instance in "Havana", the teachers in the school will help the parents who are members of the parents' committees to work with the treasury and coordinate the funds. Thus, there is some evidence that lack of education among the parents is a factor which can prevent them from fully involving in parents' committees and a factor which can prevent the committees from accomplishing all the tasks which they

are allocated. As is explained in Silva-Leander (2007), the organizational capacity of civil society organizations (e.g. parents' committees), including skilled human resources, is one internal factor of civil society in Ecuador which facilitates its role in enhancing governance and promoting state accountability. When this to some extent seems to be lacking in the parents' committees in the schools in this study, due to the general low level of education in the community, it might limit the ideal pro-active role of a parents' committee and the ideal democratic culture in the school, similarly to what is argued in some of the literature on parents' committees described in chapter three.

In the public school "Montevideo" the headmaster mentions that one reason why the parents do not want to participate in the parents' committee is that the committees do not have much money available for use. Thus lack of financial resources might be a factor which negatively affects the functioning of a parents' committee. It can reduce the motivation for parents to get involved and it may reduce what the committee is able to accomplish. Silva-Leander (2007) argues that the financial capacity of civil society organizations in Ecuador is one internal factor which influences their ability to demand state accountability. Thus it seems to be vital that the parents' committees have sufficient financial resources. If the members of the committee have to contribute financially themselves, however, this may also have negative consequences. This is evident in the private school "Rosario" where the parents associate membership in the committee with financial contributions, and therefore do not want to get involved.

The findings of this study show that for both students, parents and the school itself, there are benefits and positive outcomes of parents' involvement in committees. The members of the committee gain some influence when they take part in discussions of the school's plans and budget-decisions. As argued in Silva-Leander et al (2007), the existence of civil society organizations, e.g. parents' committees, is seen as critical to the formation of social capital at the grassroots level and as a lever for social reform. As was outlined in the introduction chapter, participation of civil society (including parents' committees) in policy-making and planning is seen as crucial for improving access to quality education in resource scarce environments and has also proved to have positive effects on student achievement (The World Bank 2013, Di Gropello 2006).

In the public school "San Antonio" there is evidence of the force that parents can have when they go together in a group. In this school, the members of the parents' committees

occasionally write letters to the local municipality and various institutions and enterprises in order to request financial contributions from these. The children and parents will benefit from this since the network of parents has force to influence these institutions to help the school. One teacher in the school explains that the parents together have more forces than the school has on its own. Thus, parents gain social capital from cooperating together. Furthermore, the headmaster in “San Antonio” explains that the members of the committee could go to the media if “something happens” or if they are not satisfied with something. Although this has not yet happened in “San Antonio”, this is further evidence that the parents together have force to change things in the school. It is likely that when parents go to the media together, they have more power to make their voice heard, than if one parent went alone. Thus, each parent will benefit and gain social capital when the parents cooperate and form networks and alliances.

8.1.6 Decision-making

As explained in the previous chapter, there are no clear observed differences between the private and the public schools regarding what kind of decisions the parents can influence. The exception is budget-decisions. The parents’ committees in all the public schools included in this study have some influence on budget-decisions. In the private school “Rosario” however, the parents are not allowed to decide anything related to the budget. In both the private schools included this study, the financial contributions (fees and additional financial contributions) from the parents make up the entire budget of the school. Thus, these schools rely entirely on the payment from the parents. The public schools do however receive government support and are therefore not dependent on financial contributions from the parents to the same degree. One could therefore presume that the parents in the private schools would be allowed to influence budget-decisions to a greater extent than parents in the public schools. Still, the findings from the private school “Rosario” show that this is not necessarily the case.

Thus, payment of matriculation and tuition fees is not a factor which necessarily allows the parents in the private schools to take part in budget-decisions to a greater extent than parents in the public schools. This contradicts the argument by Wolff & de Moura Castro (2001) mentioned in the literature review, that because they are self-governing, the private schools better reflect the preferences of the parents. But again, since the parents in the public schools

also contribute to the school, in form of manual labour and *some* voluntary financial contributions, it is likely that the public schools will let them have influence on budget-decisions and decisions in general. Moreover, as described in chapter two, the government secures the right of parents in both private and public schools to participate in the evaluation of the administrative and educational processes in the school, which may include evaluations of the school's budget (MEE2012a). Thus, requirements from the government may facilitate the influence of parents on budget-decisions. But the findings of this study show that this is not the case in the private school "Rosario".

However, in the other private school "Havana", the members in the parents' committee can at least decide how the money that the committee has accumulated should be spent. The headmaster in "Havana" explains that the reason why they are allowed to take part in these decisions is that the parents are a part of the school and it is because of them (that is, the fees they pay) that the teachers are able to receive a salary. Thus, the payment of matriculation and tuition fees is used by the headmaster as an argument for letting the parents have some influence on budget-decisions. Thus, contrary to the private school "Rosario", there is some evidence in "Havana" that the payment of fees might positively affect parents' ability to take part in budget-decisions.

Furthermore, whether or not the schools publish their budget is also interesting regarding parents opportunity to influence budget-decisions. If the budget is published, parents may be better able to make opinions related to it. As explained in chapter six, the budget of all the public primary schools is published on the internet and this is also an obligation from the government. The headmaster in the private school "Rosario" however, uses that fact that the school is private as an explanation for why they are not obliged to publish the school's budget to the parents or on the internet. For the private school "Havana" information on this issue was not obtained.

In any case, this can be related to the issue of accountability. That is, the obligation of power-holders to account for or take responsibility for their actions (The World Bank 2013). Silva-Leander (2007) explains that one external factor which creates an enabling environment for social accountability is a legal and regulatory framework for the right of citizens to access public information. Thus, requirements from the Ecuadorian government regarding openness and publication of budgets is a facilitating factor which can positively affect the degree to which each of the schools are accountable towards the parents. This in turn may increase the

parents' influence. There *may* be a stronger degree of accountability towards the parents in the public schools, since these are obliged to publish their budget. This is however uncertain, since sufficient knowledge regarding the private schools' obligations is lacking. Furthermore, it is not likely that all parents in marginalized areas have access to computers and internet. It can also be questioned whether they are able to understand the information which is published.

8.1.7 Criticism, suggestions and opinions from parents

As shown in the previous chapter, parents both in the private and the public schools might have feared negative consequences of expressing critical opinions of the school. This might be a sign of a relationship between the parents and the school where there is lack of trust between the various parts. This in turn have implications for the amount of social capital in the school and the possibility for the parents to take advantage of the relationships which they establish with the teachers. As have been explained previously, Coleman (1988) sees trust as one form of social capital and claims that a group within which there is extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trust.

Regarding what types of criticism, opinions or suggestions which the parents give, there are no clear observed differences between the private and the public schools. Parents in the private schools appear to have some expectations about what can be achieved with the matriculation and tuition fees they pay. This may lead not only to reduced involvement as described previously in the sections on manual labour and presence at school, but also to criticism of the school. Similarly, parents in the public schools seem to have expectations about what can be achieved with the money that the school receives from the government. Taken together, there appears to be expectations, disappointments and criticism among the parents both in the private and the public schools. Thus, charging matriculation and tuition fees does not necessarily lead the parents to be *more* demanding of the school, as is suggested by Wolff & De Moura Castro (2001) and mentioned in the introduction chapter.

8.2 What might facilitate or prevent involvement from the parents in the two different types of schools, private and public?

Various facilitating and preventing factors for parents' involvement in the private and the public schools, for instance government regulations, have been discussed in the previous sub-chapter. In this sub-chapter, two additional issues (job situation and lack of education), will be discussed. As will be shown, these issues are common to all the schools, both the private and the public. For convenience, the presentation of the findings and the discussion are therefore combined in the two following sections.

8.2.1 Job situation

In all the schools, both the private and the public, the fact that parents have to work is the reason most frequently given for why they do not get involved in the school. This is mentioned by parents, teachers and headmasters.

“The majority of the cases where the parents do not meet, it is because they have to go to work early in the factories. Other work during the night and come back early in the morning, it is terrible...” (Headmaster “Cartagena”, public school).

“I did not want to be part of the committee because I do not have time, I have to work” (Mother “Havana”, private school).

“Parents do not have time and I assume it is because they have to work. We are in a sector which is called “marginal” [...] we can say that it to a high extent has extreme poverty. Therefore the parents are busy. We see many women who are abandoned by their husbands, they have to be both the mother and the father at the same time [...] therefore they have to work hard to make things go around and they cannot come to school” (Headmaster “Rosario”, private school).

Most of the parents who were interviewed, both in the private and the public schools, say that they involve themselves in the school. However, they think that the reason why many parents do *not* get involved is that they have to work, sometimes both early and late. Therefore they do not have time to collaborate much. Some parents even say that the reason why they *do* have time to get involved in the school now is that they lost their job. Thus, a demanding job situation is an external factor which negatively affects parents' participation in the school.

As described in the methodology chapter, the majority of the parents who were interviewed in this study were the mothers, since they were the ones who were present at the school when I turned up. It is also confirmed by many of the respondents that it is mostly the women who collaborate in the school. The higher number of women present at school may be related to the job situation of the households. The majority of the mothers I talked to explain that they do not have any job but are “housewives”. Their men do however work. The women who work at home will most likely have more time to collaborate and get involved in the school.

The challenge of parents’ job situation is likely to be quite common in marginalized areas. Shaeffer (1992) mentions lack of resources, for instance in terms of time, as one constraint for collaboration from parents in education. The author further argues that parents who are struggling for survival do not find it easy to participate in labour-intensive collaborative activities. Similarly, as described in chapter two, the amount of working hours in the Ecuadorian population appears to negatively affect community participation (Hinton et al 2012, Seligson et al 2006).

There is no clear evidence of a difference between the private and the public schools when it comes to parents’ job situation and the amount of time and opportunity they have to get involved in the school. In both types of schools the parents work and this is a constraint in terms of their participation. However, a demanding job situation might be even more of a constraint for parents’ participation in the public schools, as there the parents have to participate more in manual labour. However, as previously mentioned, in the public school “Cartagena” there are indications that participating in manual labour (“mingas”) is actually a requirement for obtaining a place for your child in the school. Furthermore, since there is a large demand for places in the public schools in the area, at the time of matriculation, parents often line up days in advance in order to get a place for their children in one of these schools. This may imply that it is those parents who have more time and better capacity, and a less demanding job situation, who are able to obtain access for their children in a public school. This can further be another possible explanation for why more parents participate in manual labour in the public schools, than in the private schools.

8.2.2 Lack of education

“When the parents do not know how to read and write, how can they help their children?” (Teacher, “Montevideo”).

In the previous sections, it has been argued that lack, or low level, of education among the parents, may lead them to be more present at school, in order to get advice from the teachers on educational matters. Contrary, lack of education among the parents is a factor which may reduce the ability of parents' committees to function optimally. Generally, in both the private and the public schools included in this study, parents' lack of education is mentioned by the teachers and headmasters as one important factor which can explain their low level of involvement. For instance, in the public school “San Antonio” one of the teachers says that a reason why parents do not participate in the school is that many of them have not finished primary education and are illiterate. The headmaster in the private school “Rosario” says that a mayor cause for the low performance of the children in school is that their parents do not help them. There could be various reasons for this, for instance lack of education. In any case, it appears that the children suffer from not receiving help from their parents.

In all the three public schools and also the private school “Havana” the headmasters explain that the type of criticism or opinions that the school receives is not much related to pedagogy or the educational realm. One of the teachers in the public school “Cartagena” relates this to the fact that the majority of the parents in the area do not have education themselves.

However, in the section in the previous sub-chapter on the extent of criticism among the parents, it was shown that parents *do* give opinions on how the teachers do their job. Still, it appears that parents mostly complained when they felt that the teachers did not give their child sufficient attention or good enough grades. It does not seem like the parents provide much opinions regarding the way the teachers actually work inside the classroom.

The teacher who was interviewed in the private school “Havana” explains that there is a lack of interest among the parents to discuss teaching methods. This lack of interest might be seen in relationship with lack of education. In order to discuss and give opinions, parents need to have some background knowledge. When this is lacking, their interest for discussing educational matters is likely to be reduced. For some of them, the most important issue might be to obtain a place for their children in the school:

“We as parents did not have the opportunity to study. So it does not matter for most parents if it is a good or a bad school. [...] it is the students’ responsibility to study independent of whether the school is good or bad” (Mother, “San Antonio”).

Taken together, this shows that lack of education is a factor which may prevent the parents from getting involved in the school. There is no observed difference between the private and the public schools regarding this issue. As described in chapter two, studies show that in Ecuador and on the American continent in general, on the individual level citizens with higher levels of education are tending to participate much more in civil society (e.g. parents’ committees) than those with less education (Cruz 2009, Hinton et al 2012, Seligson et al 2006). In addition, lack of education among the parents is a factor which might reduce their possibility to make their voice heard. Several authors argue that the way parents involve themselves in education is influenced by their level of education (Wolff & de Moura Castro 2001, Essuman & Akyeampong 2011, Shaeffer 1992, Khan 2006). A “pro-active” role where parents hold the school accountable might be difficult to obtain in poorer areas with a high degree of illiteracy and low level of education (Wolff & De Moura Castro 2001).

Thus, parents’ lack of education might influence the degree to which they are able to hold the school responsible for their actions. However, a teacher in the public school “Montevideo” explains that the current government involves the parents more than before. The government now provides information about educational laws, so that the parents shall know about their rights and the rights of their children. This benefits parents with limited education who would not be able to obtain this knowledge in other places, according to this teacher.

9 Conclusion

In this study, parents' involvement in two private and three public primary schools in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil, Ecuador has been compared. In addition, factors which may facilitate or prevent involvement from parents have been discussed. The rationale for comparing private and public schools was to investigate the effect that the payment of matriculation and tuition fees might have on the extent and way that parents get involved in school.

The findings of this study show that one major difference between the private and the public schools, is the lack of participation in manual labour, such as cleaning and painting, among the parents in the private schools. Parents in all the public schools however, do help out in manual labour and this shows the important role that parents can play in schools in marginalized areas. In the private schools, the payment of fees is used as an argument from the parents for not participating in manual labour. The assumption that people will necessarily be more interested in maintaining what they have invested in, can therefore be questioned. Payment is also used by some parents in the private schools as an argument for not being present at school to take care of their children. They say that they pay the teachers for this. Thus, the payment of fees is in fact a preventing factor for some types of parents' involvement in the private schools included in this study. Still, respondents claim that the private schools do have necessities and would have needed the parents to help out more, especially in order to improve the infrastructure. However, charging parents for the costs of their children's schooling appear to make them less willing to help out in the school.

Furthermore, there is now a stronger demand for public than private education in the marginalized areas of Guayaquil. Parents therefore often have to line up outside the school days in advance in order to gain access for their children in a public school. In addition, in some public schools it is a requirement that the parents participate in manual labour before the school starts, in order to obtain a place for their children in the school. It has been shown that a demanding job situation is generally a preventing factor for parents' involvement in the geographic location of the study. This could imply that it is those parents with more time and capacity who are able to gain access for their children in a public school. These parents may further have more capacity to participate in manual labour during the school year, and this

may be an additional possible explanation for the difference between the private and the public schools in terms of parents' participation in manual labour.

Moreover, this study provide indications of the force that parents have together as a group, for instance when they want to request the local municipality or various enterprises for help. All parts (students, parents and the school itself) benefit when the parents in the school cooperate together and form strong networks. When parents in the private schools do not participate in manual labour in the school, they probably also spend less time in the school. They might therefore miss an opportunity to build networks and social capital with the other parents, and also with the teachers and headmasters. In turn, this could imply that there is less social capital among the parents, and between parents and the teachers/headmasters in the private schools.

When it comes to other types of parents' involvement, the findings show that there is no clear difference between the private and public schools in terms of how and to what extent they get involved. This contradicts literature which says that when parents pay for their children's schooling, they will have *increased* demands regarding the quality of the school and therefore get more involved in order to make their voice heard. There is no evidence in this study that payment of matriculation and tuition fees leads to more parents' involvement in the private schools. Parents in the public schools attend parent meetings and get involved in parent committees to the same extent as parents in the private schools.

That said, parents in the public schools contribute with voluntary financially contributions to the school, although these do not add up to the amount of total financial contributions from the parents in the private schools. And as mentioned, parents in the public schools contribute in kind with manual labour. Therefore, parents in the public schools will probably also expect to gain some influence in the school. This might explain the lack of difference between the private and the public schools when it comes to the extent to which parents for instance attend meetings and participate in committees. Parents in both types of schools contribute, either financially or with manual labour, and this may lead them to expect to have a say in school related matters.

Moreover, in contrast to studies which show that private schools in low-income areas are more accountable towards the parents, the findings in this study shows no clear evidence of such a difference. Rather, there is some, but uncertain, indication of more accountability in

the public schools. The Ecuadorian government requires that the budget of the public schools shall be published on the internet. In one of the private schools included in this study however, the headmaster explains that since the school is private, she is not obliged to do this. For the other private school included in this study, information about this issue was not obtained. Thus, more information regarding the private schools obligations to publish their budget is needed. Still, the findings from the public schools show that regulations from the government is a facilitating factor when it comes to the opportunities for parents to gain access to information. This information might further facilitate their opportunities to make demands of the school. Requirements from the government thus positively affect the extent to which parents get involved in the school. Although the public schools *may* be regulated to a greater extent than the private schools when it comes to the requirement of publishing their budget, both private and public schools in Ecuador are affected by other types of government regulations which may facilitate parents' involvement. For instance, the right of the parents to associate in a parents' committee is secured in both types of schools.

The findings of this study show that parents' involvement is vital in a marginalized context. Both the private and the public schools appear to be dependent upon the parents. They benefit from the parents' help, either in form of financial contributions or manual labour. Thus, the common marginalized context of the private and public schools is a facilitating factor for parents' involvement. The needs of the schools may further lead the teachers and headmasters to aim for a good relationship with the parents. That is, they seek to gain beneficial social capital.

At the same time, parents in both the private and public schools benefit from turning up at school and receiving help from the teachers related to their children's homework. That is, parents can gain social capital from the relationships they establish with the teachers. Parents in the public schools *may* be facilitated in this respect since there are indications that they generally spend more time in the school. On the other hand, since the pupil-teacher ratio is much lower in the private schools than the public school in this study, the teachers in the private schools might have more time for each student and his/her parents. This may put the parents in the private school in an advantaged position regarding the general opportunity to meet the teachers and receive help from them.

Establishing relations with the teachers and receiving help from them related to their children's school work, is vital for parents in an area where most of the inhabitants do not

have much education. Thus, the low level of education among the parents is a factor which might lead them to turn up more and get more involved in the school, in order to meet the teachers and by that obtain valuable social capital. However, the low level of education among the parents is also mentioned as a factor which may *reduce* their involvement. For instance, they may be less able to give feedback on educational matters or accomplishing tasks in a parents' committee.

I have argued that there is most likely no significant difference between the parents in the public and the private schools in terms of level of income and level of education. This common background of the parents in the two types of schools might be a possible explanation for why the difference between them is not greater, regarding the extent to which they turn up at school in order to receive help from the teachers. If the parents in the private schools had higher levels of income, better jobs or higher level of education than the parents in the public schools, it is likely that they had better opportunities for obtaining the social capital at other places. They would therefore probably be less interested in being present at the school in order to obtain this.

Recommendations for development policy and further research

This study shows that there are benefits for the various parts; the students, the school and the parents, when the parents get involved in the school. The study also indicates that there are differences in parents' involvement between private and public schools in marginalized areas. Charging parents in the private schools for their children's education appears to negatively affect their willingness to help out with manual labour in the school, even though this is needed. This may negatively affect their opportunity to build valuable networks and social capital with the other parents and the teachers. I will argue that this is an issue which should be kept in mind in the planning of education development projects.

In future studies, it would be interesting to explore to a greater extent how parents' participation in school may benefit the students in terms of academic achievements. That is, it would be relevant to investigate and compare the students' test results or examination scores in private and public schools. This could further be linked to the extent of parents' involvement and existence of networks among the parents in the two types of schools.

References

- AKF-team (2007) Non-State Providers and Public-Private Community Partnerships in Education: Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008. UNESCO.
- Ary D., Jacobs L.C. & Sorensen C. (2010) Introduction to Research in Education. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Belfield C.R. & Levin H.M. (2002) Education Privatization: Causes, Consequences and Planning Implications. Paris: UNESCO.
- Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012) BTI 2012 Ecuador Country Report. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.
- Bryman A. (2008) Social Research Methods. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coleman J.S. (1988) Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. American Journal of Sociology. **94**: 95-120
- Coleman J.S. & Hoffer T. (1987) Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.
- Córdova, R.A., Rosillo, C.P., & Whist, E. (2009) External Evaluation of the Community Development Project (DECO). Quito and Oslo: Misión Alianza de Noruega en Ecuador.
- Cruz, J.M. (2009) Social Capital in the Americas: Participation in Parents' Associations. Americas Barometer Insights: 2009 (24): 1-6.
- EFA Global Monitoring Report (2011). UNESCO.
- EFA Global Monitoring Report (2012). UNESCO.

Di Gropello E. (2006) A Comparative Analysis of School-based Management in Central America Washington D.C: The World Bank.

Essuman, A. & Akyeampong K. (2011) Decentralisation policy and practice in Ghana: the promise and reality of community participation in education in rural communities. Journal of Education Policy **26** (4): 513-527.

Global Education Digest (2012): Opportunities Lost: The impact of grade repetition and early school leaving. Montreal: UIS.

Goddard, R.D (2003) Relational Networks, Social Trust, and Norms: A Social Capital Perspective on Students' Chances of Academic Success. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis **25** (1): 59-74.

Henderson A.T. & Berla N. (1994): A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement. Washington D.C: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Hinton N., Rodríguez M., Pereira B.F. & Smith A.E. (2012) Chapter One: Equality of Economic and Social Opportunities in the Americas. In Seligson M.A., Smith A.E. & Zechmeister E.J. (Eds) The Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas 2012: Towards Equality of Opportunity (pp.75-117) USAID, LAPOP, Vanderbilt University.

Hinton N., Moseley M. & Smith A.E. (2012) Chapter Two: Equality of Political Participation in the Americas. In Seligson M.A., Smith A.E. & Zechmeister E.J. (Eds) The Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas 2012: Towards Equality of Opportunity (pp.75-117) USAID, LAPOP, Vanderbilt University.

INEC (2010) Censo de Población y Vivienda

Informe de Progreso Educativo Ecuador (2010) PREAL, Fundación Ecuador & Grupo Faro.

Khan F. (2006) Who participates in school councils and how? Prospects XXXVI (1): 97-119.

Lauglo J. (2010) Chapter four: Sosial kapital og utdanning. In Backe-Hansen E. & Hydle I.

(eds) (2010) Sosial kapital og andre kapitaler hos barn og unge i Norge Oslo: NOVA.

Lauglo J. (forthcoming 2013) Chapter six: Sosial kapital for ungdommers utdanning. In

Heggen K, Helland H. & Lauglo J. (in progress in 2013) Utdanningssosiologi [working title] Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Lizarazo, N. (2007) Reporte sobre el estado actual de educación de personas jóvenes y adultas

en Bolivia, Costa Rica Y Ecuador: Informe de Ecuador. Revista Interamericana de Educación de Adultos (1): 17-32.

MANE (2012) Informe de Linea Base Para los Programas de Mane. Guayaquil: Misión

Alianza de Noruega en Ecuador.

MEE (2007) Ten Year Education Plan in Ecuador 2006-2015 Second Year. Ministerio de

Educación del Ecuador

MEE (2012a) Marco Legal Educativo. Quito: Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador.

MEE (2012b) Listado de Costos de Educación Particular 2012-2013. Ministerio de Educación

del Ecuador, dirección provincial de educación del Guayas. Retrieved 14.6.2013 from

http://www.educacionguayaquil.gob.ec/_upload/JRC-2012%20-%202013.pdf

MEE (2013a) Nuevo Model de Gestión. Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. Retrieved

27.5.2013 from <http://educacion.gob.ec/que-es-el-nuevo-modelo-de-gestion-educativa/>

MEE (2013b) El Circuito Educativo Intercultural y Bilingüe. Ministerio de Educación del

Ecuador. Retrieved 27.5.2013 from <http://educacion.gob.ec/el-circuito-educativo/>

MEE (2013c) Constitución de la República. Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. Retrieved 14.4.2013 from <http://www.educacion.gob.ec/legislacion-educativa/constitucion.html>

Mrazek M.F. (2008) Boosting Sustainable and Equitable Social Development. In: V. Fretes-Cibils, M. Giugale and E. Somensatto (eds.) Revisiting Ecuador's Economic and Social Agenda in an Evolving Landscape: 219- 249. Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank.

Patrinos, H.A., Barrera-Osorio F. & Guáqueta J. (2009) The Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education. Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.

Putnam R.D. (1995) Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. Journal of Democracy **6** (1): 65-78.

Putnam R.D. (2001) Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences. Canadian Journal of Policy Research.

Putnam R.D. & Goss K.A. (2002) Introduction. In: R. Putnam (Ed.) Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society. (3-19) New York: Oxford University Press.

Rasmussen M.I. (2011) Informal but Planned Settlements: A Case in Guayaquil. Conference paper: Architecture in the Fourth Dimension, held Nov. 15-17 2011: Boston.

Rose P. (2010) Achieving Education for All through public-private partnerships? Development in Practice **20**: (473-483).

- Rugel F.A.B., Requena J.A.R., Narvàez A.E.V. & Aguilar M.E. (2011) La Educación en el Ecuador, Situación y Propuesta del Sistema de Vouchers Educativos como Alternativa. Guayaquil: ESPOL.
- Seligson M.A., Donoso, J.C., Moreno D., Orcés D. & Schwarz-Blum V. (2006) Democracy Audit Ecuador 2006 USAID, LAPOP, Vanderbilt University.
- Seligson M.A., Donoso, J.C., Montalvo D. & Orcés D. (2011) Political Culture of Democracy in Ecuador 2010: Democratic Consolidation in the Americas in Hard Times. USAID, LAPOP, Vanderbilt University.
- Shaeffer S. (1992) Collaborating for Educational Change: The Role of Parents and the Community in School Improvement. International Journal on Educational Development 12 (4): 277-295.
- Silva-Leander A. (Ed.) (2007) Civil Society's Role in the Governance Agenda in Ecuador. Social Development Papers no. 105. Washington D.C: The World Bank.
- Somensatto E. (2008) Context and Executive Summary. In V. Fretes-Cibils, M. Giugale and E. Somensatto (eds.) Revisiting Ecuador's Economic and Social Agenda in an Evolving Landscape: 1-42. Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank.
- The Economist (2009) Ecuador's education reforms: Correa's curriculum. Retrieved 5.3.2013 from <http://www.economist.com/node/14258942>
- The World Bank (2013) The World Bank Sourcebook on Social Accountability Retrieved 5.03.2013, from http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/essd9.swf

Tiepolo M. (2007) The Barrio Marginado Regularization in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Torino: Politecnico.

Tooley J. & Dixon P. (2005) Private Education is Good for the Poor: A Study of Private Schools Serving the Poor in Low-Income Countries. Washington D.C: Cato Institute.

UIS (2009) Education Indicators, Technical Guidelines. Retrieved 12.01.2013, from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/eiguide09-en.pdf>

UIS (2013a) Table 1: “Education Systems”. Retrieved 13.01.2013 from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=163>

UIS (2013b) Table 5: Enrolment ratios by ISCED level. Retrieved 12.01.2013, from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=182>

UIS (2013c) Table 13A: Measures of access to, progression and completion of lower secondary education. Retrieved 13.01.2013 from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=3967>

UIS (2013d) Table 6: Intake Rates to Primary Education. Retrieved 11.01.2013, from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=183>

Vos, R. & Ponce J. (2004) Meeting the Millennium Development Goal in Education: a cost-effectiveness analysis for Ecuador. ISS Working Paper Series/General Series **402**:1-37.

Wolff, L. & de Moura Castro C. (2001). Public or private education for Latin America: that is the (false) question, Inter-American Development Bank, Sustainable Development Department.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview guide

Respondents: Parents

1. How many children do you have? In what grade?
2. Do you live close to the school?
3. How do you get involved in the school?
4. Do you spend time at the school?
5. What do you do there?
6. Why do you get involved or not get involved in school matters?
7. Is there anything that would make it easier for you to involve yourself in the school?
8. Do you attend school meetings? How often?
9. How many parents attend the meetings?
10. How often are the meetings held?
11. Are there general school meetings or meetings for the parents in each grade?
12. What is discussed in the meetings?
13. Do you or the other parents sometimes raise your own opinions, come with suggestions for change or criticism at these meetings or at other occasions?
14. How do you feel that the school, the headmaster and teachers respond to these opinions, suggestions and criticism?
15. Have there been times when you have been dissatisfied with the school?

16. Do you feel that the headmaster listens to your wishes and needs?
17. Do you feel that you have the opportunity to take part in decisions in the school?
18. Do you do any manual labour in the school? Such as cleaning or renovation of the infrastructure?
19. Is this obligatory?
20. How many parents participate in manual labour in the school?
21. Do you or the other parents sometimes participate in activities held in order to accumulate money to the school?
22. How is the money spent?
23. Does the school give information about its budget or how the budget is spent?
24. Do the parents have opportunity to decide on how the school shall spend its budget?
25. Do you feel that you get enough information from the school?
26. How does the school give information to the parents?
27. Is there a parents' committee or Parent-Teacher Association in this school?
28. How is the committee structured? How is it organized?
29. Are there any intake regulations to this committee?
30. What do you think is the purpose of this committee?
31. What does the committee do?
32. What is discussed in the meetings of this committee?
33. Do you pay any school fees, contributions or do you pay for school uniforms, books etc?
34. Do you have any education yourself?

35. How is your job situation?
36. Do you have more children and do they attend this or another school?
37. Does your husband/wife get involved in the school?
38. What do you feel is the most important purpose of basic education?
39. What are your hopes for your child's future?

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Respondents: teachers and headmasters

1. How do the parents get involved in the school and school related matters?
2. Why do you think parents get involved or not get involved in the school?
3. Is there anything that would make it easier for the parents to get involved in the school?
4. Is there a parents' committee or Parent-Teacher Association in this school?
5. How is the committee structured? How is it organized?
6. Are there any intake regulations to this committee?
7. What is the purpose of this committee? What does the committee do?
8. What is discussed in the meetings of the committee?
9. Do the parents attend school meetings? How often and how many attend?
10. What is discussed in these meetings?
11. How frequently are the school meetings held?
12. Are these general meetings or for the parents in the individual grades?

13. Do the parents sometimes raise their own opinions or come with suggestions for change or criticism in the school meetings or at other occasions?
14. How does the school administration respond to these opinions, suggestions or criticism?
15. Do the parents have the opportunity to take part in decisions in the school?
16. Do parents do any manual labour in the school? Such as cleaning or renovation of the infrastructure?
17. How many parents participate in manual labour? Is it compulsory?
18. Do the parents participate in activities held in order to accumulate money for the school? How many participate?
19. What kind of information does the school give to the parents?
20. How does the school give this information?
21. What do you feel is the most important purpose of basic education? Why is it important that the children go to school?
22. Do the parents pay any school fees, contributions or do they pay for school uniforms, books etc?
23. Do any of the parents receive financial support from the government?
24. Does the majority of the children attend classes daily?
25. How is the school's relationship with the government?
26. Are there other schools close to this school? Are these private or public?
27. How many students are there in this school?
28. How many teachers are there? How many grades?
29. What kind of food do the children receive in the school and who finances it?

Appendix 3

List of additional interviewees

Employee at the Sub-Secretary of Education, Guayaquil (Subsecretaría de Educación del Distrito de Guayaquil) – interview conducted 10th of September at the office of the Sub-Secretary.

Employee at the Sub-Directorate of Education Guayaquil (Dirección Provincial de Educación de Guayas) – Interviews conducted 2nd and 16th of October at the office of the Sub-Directorate.

Employees at the Norwegian Mission Alliance (Misión Alianza de Noruega en Ecuador) – Interviews conducted 7th of September and 25th of October at the office of the Mission Alliance.